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DANDY PICK, DETECTIVE: Or, THE STILL HUNT AT BURNT MATCH.

BY ROBERT RANDOLPH INMAN.



"UP WID YER HAN'S DHERE, ME DANDY!" WAS THE COMMAND.

Dandy Dick, Detective;

OR,

The Still Hunt at Burnt Match.

BY ROBERT RANDOLPH INMAN.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY.

MANY miles north of Denver, in a lonely, picturesque canyon, on the afternoon of a fair summer day, a horseman was proceeding leisurely southward.

He was a man of six and twenty years, gracefully formed yet powerful of build, and more than ordinarily good-looking. He had clear-cut features, dark eyes and hair, and a mustache to be proud of.

Clad in rather dandyish style, he seemed astray in that wild region. A glossy silk hat was in keeping with his shiny "biled" shirt and immaculate high collar, as well as with his suit of finest black cloth. He sported a diamond pin and ring, and a pair of stylish low-cuts incased his feet.

Mounted upon a superb coal-black horse, with handsome and valuable saddle and saddle-cloth, he would not have looked out of place on the bridle-path of some city park, had it not been that he was equipped for traveling. A pair of neat saddle-pockets hung in front of him, a blanket was rolled up behind, and a short rifle hung in its case within easy reach of his right hand.

He was riding along leisurely, as stated, as though his time was his own and he had plenty of it. The bridle hung loosely in his left hand, as he sat with the right resting idly upon the horn of the saddle. His head was bowed, as though his thoughts were far from his present surroundings. His lips were compressed, and his face wore a stern, set expression as of grim determination. A far-away look was in his eyes, and in their depths was a glow or glint suggestive of a smoldering fire, needing but a breath to fan it into a blaze.

Presently he aroused from his reverie, a heavy sigh escaped him, and looking about, he urged his horse to a faster gait.

"Is the trail never to end?" he asked himself. "Is it ever to be thus? Am I never to—My God!"

Interrupted by a sudden stopping and rearing of his horse, a sight met his gaze that might well call forth that startled exclamation.

He had just rounded a bend in the canyon, and right before him lay the carcass of a horse, while beyond were the bodies of a woman and a child, cold in the embrace of Death!

The dandy rider's horse had turned sidewise as it reared and gave a snort of fright, and now stood trembling while its master surveyed the terrible scene—terrible indeed, for it mutely evidenced a frightful tragedy.

Neither the woman's face nor that of the child was presented to view, for the woman was lying face downward, and the child was in her arms and partly beneath her as she lay. On the woman's back, plainly to be seen, were dark spots where bullets had entered.

"My God!" the discoverer repeated, but this is horrible! And shot in the back, too, as she was evidently running to escape. Who can she be? Who can have done so fiendish a deed?"

Slipping from the saddle, he led his horse around the carcass of the dead animal, and forward to the spot where the bodies reposed.

Laying a hand upon the woman, he found that her body was cold, while the condition of the blood proved that the crime had been committed some hours before.

Letting go of his horse, he took hold of the woman's lifeless body and tenderly turned it so that he could see the face.

The moment he caught sight of the still, cold features, a cry of agony escaped him, and dropping the body he staggered back, covering his eyes with his hands.

"Anita!" was his cry. "Anita! Anita!"

It was some moments before he could do aught else than moan, repeating that name over and over in his uncontrollable grief.

Presently, upon the impulse of a thought, he removed his hands from his face and sprang forward to the bodies, exclaiming:

"The child! I must know the truth, though it kill me."

Lifting the body of the woman again, he

draw the child from her arms, and then, with a pause as if to gather strength for it, gazed into its face.

Another cry, a cry even more heartrending than the first, broke from his lips, and in a moment tears were coursing down his cheeks, while he held the lifeless child and gazed at its face through the blinding mist.

"My God! oh, my God!" he moaned aloud, "this is more than I can bear. Anita! Anita! How I wronged you—how I wronged you! Can't you speak to me? Can't you utter just one word—the name of the wretch who did this thing? Oh! must I go mad—mad?"

Laying the little body down gently, he sprang to his feet, pressed his hands to his head, and paced up and down.

The dead woman was apparently no more than twenty years of age, very comely of face and form, though the face bore traces of either great anxiety or of deep sorrow and suffering.

The child was a boy of five years or thereabouts, and one who must have been strikingly beautiful in life. Its face was full and round, fair even in death, and a wealth of golden curls clung about the cheeks and neck.

The boy, like the woman, had been shot, but the bullets that had taken his life had first passed through the woman's body, which she must have offered as a willing, though unavailing shield! The holes of no less than five bullets were in her back, two of which had passed through.

Up and down, up and down, the discoverer of this terrible crime paced, his hat off and lying in the dust, and his hands still pressed to his head, while he could only groan aloud in his mighty anguish. Now and again he would cry out with wild accent—"Anita! Anita!" calling upon her spirit to come back and reveal to him the truth of the tragedy.

Gradually his grief spent its force, or rather, the outburst it had occasioned, and finally he became comparatively calm.

Then staying his steps, his hands clinched, he stood and gazed at the dead.

"Is this the end of that long, long trail?" he asked himself. "Is this my reward? No! as the high heavens bear my vow," he cried, "the end is not yet! Ye gods of vengeance, the wretch that did this deed shall meet his fate at my hands—I swear it! No rest will I know till this crime has been avenged. A sworn avenger before, I am now and henceforth a pitiless and inexorable Nemesis!"

CHAPTER II.

A TIMELY HELPING HAND.

For a long while, then, the man stood silent, his hands clasped in front of him, gazing at the two forms at his feet.

At last, with a heavy sigh, he roused up, and taking a knife from his pocket, bent over the body of the boy and severed two of the shining curls.

These he folded carefully and placed in his pocketbook, and having done that, next proceeded to search the body of the woman. In her pocket he found some money, though not much, and some scraps of paper, but nothing of importance.

While he was still engaged in the search he was suddenly startled by a challenging voice.

"Up wid yer han's dhere, me gallus dandy!" was the command. "Av ye don't, begobs it's makin' av a mouse-hole t'rough ye Oi'll be doin'!"

The dandified stranger had sprung up at the first words to find himself covered by a huge gun in the hands of a young Irishman mounted upon a large mule.

"Aw—aw—my good fellow," he gasped in apparent great fright, at the same time adjusting an eyeglass to his eye; "don't shoot! Don't shoot, I beg! I have been doing nothing wrong, I assure you."

"Up wid yer hands, ye spalpeen, I say, or niver a praste will save ye!" and the mule rider brought his gun to deadly aim.

Assured that he was at the mercy of the Irishman up went both arms.

"There, now, be aisy, an' till me true phwat in blazes is dhe m'anin' av all dhis, dhen?" the young Irishman demanded. "Who killed dhe leddy an' dhe b'y, av ye didn't do it yer-self? Begorra, but it is shootin' av ye on suspicion Oi had ought to be doin', so Oi had."

"On my word of honor I had nothing to do with it," the dandy protested with all earnestness. "They must have been dead for hours, as you can see for yourself if you look close. I found them here, just as you see them, and was searching to find some clew to the mystery."

"Are yez givin' me dhat shtraight?"

"On my word I am telling you the truth. Do I look like a murderer of women and children?"

"Well, no, Oi must admit dhat yez don't," the young Irishman allowed, and he lowered the gun and rode forward. "Let me warn yez not to thry any thricks wid me, dthough, fur av ye do Oi have enough lead pills in me gun to convart ye into a porous-plaster afore ye can wink."

"I have no intention of trying any tricks upon you," was assured. "A horrible murder has been committed here. See the cowardly way in which this poor woman has been shot down. These bodies must be decently buried, and I see you have pick and spade with you. If you are an honest man, I am only too glad that you happened along."

"Barney O'Linn is dhat same, sor," the young Irishman declared, now slipping out of the saddle. "Av dhere was wan dishonest hair in me head, sare it is pullin' av it out Oi would be doin', an' dhat instanter, so Oi would. But phwat do yez make av dhis horrible shtate av tings sor?"

The young Irishman looked to be about twenty years old. He was homely, but had an honest face and a pair of deep blue eyes that were full of strength of character. A close inspection seemed to inspire the stranger with confidence in him.

"What do I make of it?" the dandy repeated. "I make of it just what it is, the most cold-blooded affair I ever heard of. It has been a murder, a heartless, fiendish murder."

"Sure Oi belave yez are roight, so Oi do," the younger man agreed. "It looks loike dhe work av dhat murtherin' villain, Devil Duval."

"Devil Duval? Who is he?"

"Sure it is new ye must be in dhis part av dhe country, an' ye have never heard of Devil Duval, sor."

"I admit that I am a stranger here," was the return. "Tell me who and what this personage is, of whom you speak, and why you think it was he that did this thing. I am interested."

"He is dhe terror of all dhis part av dhe country, an' dhat's phwat Devil Duval is, sor. He is a murtherer at large, so he is, and a road-agent such as was never known before nor since, begob. An' dhat's phwy dhey call him Devil."

"But he must have some other name, I should say."

"Av he has, nobody knows phwat it is."

"Then it isn't Duval?"

"No more it is, sor. He began by callin' himsel' Claude Duval, or somet'ing av dhat shtyle; but he soon came to be known as such a monsther dhat folks called him a devil, an' from dhat it was tacked onto him as Devil Duval."

"Ah! now I understand. But, why do you think this is a specimen of his work? Is he a murderer of women and children?"

"Begorra, he's a murtherer av anybody, sor. No crime is too bad for him, av all Oi have heard av him is thrue. He is a devil indade, sor."

"Then you have never seen him?"

"No more Oi have, an' never do Oi want to, aythur."

"What more do you know about him? He has others with him, I imagine."

"So he has, worse luck. Dhere is said to be six av dhem, an' dhey is called dhe Devil's Half-Dozen."

"A fitting name for them, if this is truly the work of their hands. But let us perform the sad duty before us, if you are willing to assist me."

"More dhan willing Oi am, sor. Sure dhe heart of me is hurted sore, so it is, at dhe seight av dthese two innocent wans a-lyin' here in cold blood."

With that he turned to his mule and set about getting his pick and spade out for use.

The keen eyes of the stranger were upon him, and it looked as though the young Irishman had found favor in his sight.

But few words passed between the two during the next half hour. Barney had to go a little distance to find a suitable spot to dig a grave, and the unknown remained to prepare the bodies for burial.

Taking the rolled blanket from behind the saddle on his horse, he unstrapped and unrolled it, and then with his knife cut it in two pieces, one larger than the other. In these he then wrapped the bodies of the dead, having first pressed a kiss upon the cold brow of each.

At the end of half an hour or so the grave was ready, and the young Irishman returned to lend his aid in carrying the bodies to it.

Tenderly they were lifted up, in turn, and

carried to their resting-place, where they were as tenderly laid in the grave, side by side. Then was a pause, the young man looking to his companion for a word or signal before beginning the work of filling.

For some seconds neither moved or spoke. Then the unknown gave a nod and a wave of the hand, indicating that the grave was to be filled, and turned hurriedly and sorrowfully away, retracing his steps to his waiting horse. The young Irishman looked after him for a moment, shook his head in a puzzled way, then set briskly to work.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPER QUESTION PUT.

WHEN the young Irishman's work was finished he shouldered his pick and spade, and went forward to the place where the unknown was awaiting him.

The dandified but stern-countenanced stranger was leaning against his horse, his arms folded, evidently lost in deepest thought, and he did not look up until spoken to.

"Dhe work is all done, sor," the young Irishman announced.

"Ha! I had almost forgotten you and what you were doing. I have let you do all the work it seems, but I am going to pay you well for it."

"Divil a cent av pay do Oi want, sor. Oi could see dhe sorry ye was in, an' Oi was willing enough to do it all mesel'. Was dhe dead wans anybody to you, sor, av Oi may be askin'?"

"A question I cannot answer now," was the response. "But what is your name, my good fellow? I think you mentioned it awhile ago."

"Barney O'Linn is me name, sor."

"And what is your business? But I take it you are a miner."

"Sure me business at prisent is to be lookin' fur business, sor. Sure it is prospectin' fur a better prospect Oi am."

"And how much is it paying you, Barney? I have taken a fancy to you, even on so short acquaintance, and if we can come to terms I believe I will employ you."

"How much is it payin' me, is it? Begorra, it is less dhan nothin' Oi am makin' every day av me loife, so it is; and out av dhe which Oi am expected to kape mesel' an' fade me mule. But phwat do yous be wantin' wid dhe loikes av me?"

"I'll tell you that presently. Are you much acquainted in this part of the country, Barney?"

"Furder north Oi am well enough acquainted, sor, but Oi was never here before in me loife. Oi was headin' fur dhe town av Burnt Match, lookin' fur wurruk."

"That is satisfactory. I am on my way to that camp, too. Now I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll give you a dollar a day, Barney, and find you and your mule besides."

"Oi'm yer terrapin, begob!" the young Irishman cried. "Oi'm yours to command, sor, an' dhe service ye require av me is honest. Av it isn't, begob Oi don't want to have anythin' to do wid yez, an' dhat is plain talkin'."

"That is even more satisfactory, Barney. It is a bargain, and here's my hand on it. You will be my attendant; to take care of my horse and perform other light duties. You'll probably have an easy time of it. I hope so, anyhow."

"Sure it is a puzzle to me yez are," the young Irishman suddenly exclaimed. "Whin first Oi set me two eyes on yez, sure it was a soft fool av a dude Oi took ye to be. Now may Oi be hanged av Oi know phwat to tink av yez. But it's no question Oi will be askin' yez; phwat am Oi to be callin' av ye, sor?"

The unknown smiled, though sadly enough.

"I believe you are a diamond in the rough, Barney," he remarked. "My real name is Richard Prince Darrel; but I prefer to be known as Darrel—Dick Darrel, to the people in this wild region. You understand?"

"Dhat same Oi do, sor. As to my being a diamond in dhe rough, Oi don't know; but it is a rough toime Oi have been havin', all dhe same. Sure it is glad Oi am to engage wid ye, fur dhe more Oi see av ye dhe better Oi loike ye. Oi only hope Oi can pl'aze ye, our Misther Prince Dick."

Prince Dick! the title struck the other as a good one.

"As I have no doubt you will. Now, one other point, and we will go on. What would you say if I were to tell you I am going to hunt down the murderers of this woman and child?"

"Do yez m'ane dhat, Misther Darrel?" was the quick demand. "Av ye do, begorra ye may count me in wid ye. Never a more dirty piece av business did Oi ever see nor phwat dhat same was. An' Barney O'Linn is the b'y as says it."

"I do mean it, Barney, and I want your help. Will you go in with me, and see it to the bitter end?"

"Dhat same Oi will, and here's me hand, sor; but, all dhe same it is a big contrahct Oi tink ye have taken, if it's Divil Duval that is the murderer."

They grasped hands for a moment in hearty pressure, after which they mounted their animals and rode away.

Passing the new-made grave, the man of mystery looked at it with mournful gaze, the firm lines of his face hard drawn, and inwardly he repeated the vow he had already taken.

They had gone but a little distance when they were startled by the sound of a woman's scream.

Both drew rein at once, and Barney exclaimed.

"Phwat the divil was dhat?"

The scream was repeated.

It was not far away, but no one was in sight on the trail, and the view was open for some distance in both directions.

Suddenly a horse and rider dashed out into the main canyon from a transverse gorge a little distance ahead, turning in the direction of the two travelers; and seeing them, the rider appealed for help.

Dick Darrel had his rifle in hand quickly, while Barney reached for his blunderbuss and brought it to the front with admirable promptitude; and at the same time they drew apart to allow the approaching woman room to dash between them.

A woman the rider was, and it was she who had uttered the screams. A rather prepossessing person she proved, as she came nearer, but her face bore an expression of terror, and her eyes were wild and frightened. She looked to be not over twenty, was plainly but neatly clad, and could ride like one born to the saddle.

"Save me!" she cried, as she dashed up and passed between Dick and his man. "Save me from those devils who are pursuing me!"

There was no time to question her, for just then two horsemen whirled out into the canyon, turning without slackening speed, and in a moment were almost at hand.

At their appearance Dick brought his short rifle to bear upon them, Barney following suit with his big gun, and by the time the fellows were straightened in the canyon they saw they were covered.

They drew rein immediately, but their speed was such that they could not stop at once, and when they finally did stop, they were within a few yards of the threatening weapons.

"Up with your hands, gentlemen!" Dick Darrel quietly commanded.

"An' be loively about it, too!" cried Barney. "Av yez don't, begorra, Oi won't be responsible fur phwat will happen!"

The fellows hesitated but a second; their hands were raised, while they indulged in some choice execrations.

Meanwhile the woman had checked her horse, and now rode back and stopped between Dick and his man, facing her enemies with a revolver in her grasp. Her demeanor had wonderfully changed.

"You may swear, you curs!" she cried. "Thanks to my timely rescue, I am in a position to defy you now!"

"We demands this 'ere woman, strangers!" one of the fellows blustered. "She is ther wife of my pard hyar, an' we is goin' ter have her, you bet."

"I don't see how you are going to get her," Prince Dick quietly remarked. "We will hear what she has to say about the matter. In the mean time, take care that your hands are kept well up."

"He tells a lie," the woman fiercely cried. "I never saw either of them before this hour. They came out upon the trail behind me a little while ago, and ordered me to halt. I refused, and they tried to capture me, threatening to shoot me if I did not stop."

"Dhat looks a good deal more loikely, begob!" exclaimed Barney O'Linn. "Oi have a notion to let dhrove at yez wanst, just fur luck, anyhow. Av Oi did, begorra dhrove wouldn't be scraps enough left av yez to hould a preachin' over. Kape up yer fins, or Oi'm a gossoon av Oi don't pepper yez widout winkin'!"

"You heard what the lady said," observed Dick, in his quiet way.

"An' I say she's lyin' to ye!" the fellow retorted. "Ain't she yer wife, pard?" to his companion.

"In course she are!" that unworthy affirmed. "What are more, I wants her, too. You had better give her up, strangers."

"Do not believe them, sir," the young woman

appealed to Dick. "Does it look reasonable that I am the wife of so foul a creature?"

"Divil a bit it does," decidedly declared Barney. "Say but dhe wurred, miss, an' sure it is touchin' off me musketoon Oi'll be doin', an' blowin' av dhe rascals clear out of dhe country."

"It certainly does not look reasonable," answered Dick. "I decline to take any stock in such a tale as that. What are you going to do about it, fellows?"

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

PRINCE DICK and his man had decidedly the vantage.

There was only one thing the fellows could do and that was to make the best of a bad situation.

But, there was yet a good deal of bluster in them, as there generally is in knaves of their stripe, and in answer to Dick's demand the spokesman of the pair blurted out:

"We'll show ye what we'll do about it, Mister Dandy, if yer gives us half a chance. You has got no right ter chip in on this deal. This hyar woman are ther wife o' my pard, an' he wants her. That's ther hull sarmount, text an' title. Will yer give her up, an' save furdur trouble?"

"I believe you—believe you to be a pair of precious liars and scamps," returned Dick quietly enough. "We will not give the lady up to you, so set your minds easy upon that point. As to my right to chip in—as you call it. I am responsible to no one but myself for that; and, as to further trouble, it is for you to decide whether there shall be any or not. Again, what are you going to do about it?"

"Dhat's dhe proper question, begob!" reiterated the wild Irishman. "Av ye only was aware how me finger is itchin' to tickle dhe trigger av me gun, sure it is faintin' dead away ye would be afther doin', so ye would. Sure it is a double-barreled load av buckshot Oi have in dhe wan, an' av ever Oi was to set dhem loose, it is prashus little dhrove would be left av ye, and moind phwat Oi'm sayin'. Phwat are yez goin' to do about it? Shpake out now, quick."

"Durn it, yer bas got ther best of us!" growled the mouthpiece of the pair. "I opines we'll have ter give it up fer this time. We'll meet yer again, though, me fine lady, an' then—"

"Would it not be better to arrest them, sir?" suggested the woman, interrupting. "Secure them for me, and I will drive them to the nearest camp and make a charge against them."

"Yer hain't got no right ter do that 'ere!" protested one of the ruffians. "We ain't done nothin' ter you, an'—"

"Hould yer whist, will yez!" shouted Barney. "Av yez don't, it will be hailin' av lead, an' a good-by fer ye, ye villain!"

"What camp are you heading for, miss?" Dick inquired.

"I am on my way to a place called Burnt Match, sir."

"Just where we are going. We will take the rascals along with us."

The pretty pair of course demurred vigorously, and then began to try to beg off, but the verdict had been rendered.

Dick and the young woman held them covered, while Barney disarmed them under Dick's directions, and in a few minutes they were helpless and at the mercy of their captors.

"Now, then, face about!" Prince Dick ordered. "And take care that you do not try to run away."

"Av ye do, may dhe good saints have mercy on ye!" added Barney; "divil a bit will I!"

In that manner the little company of five went forward, on their way to the camp mentioned.

The afternoon was now waning, the town was several miles away—as they presently learned by a guide-post at the fork of the trail, and there was little prospect of arriving there before dark.

Barney rode next behind the prisoners, his ugly looking gun in hand ready for action, while Dick and the woman brought up the rear. They talked as they rode along, but Dick learned little concerning her. Her name, she told him, was Viola Tazewell.

It was just about dark when they rode into the town of Burnt Match. The camp was lighted up, and from one building, one that shone out conspicuous among its neighbors, floated the sound of music.

As they rode forward into the street, Dick noticed that the young woman drew a thick veil down over her eyes, as though she did not want to be recognized. That was his impression.

The three being strangers in the place, it was but natural that they should head for the build-

ing mentioned, since there the center of local interest seemed to be; and in a few moments they halted before its open doors.

All who were on the piazza of the saloon, as it proved to be, gave immediate attention to the new arrivals.

Dandy Dick—as he was destined to be called—rode forward to the steps, and inquired:

"Have you a constable, sheriff, or anything of the sort in this camp, friends? If you have, I would like to see him."

"That's what we have, stranger," one of the group spoke up. "We've got a mayor hyar what are a whole team all in himself. Hey, feller-citizens?"

"That's what we has," was the immediate response.

"Well, who is he?" inquired Dick. "Where can we find him?"

"He's ther Honorable Hampton Warde, ter answer yer first question; an' ter tackle yer second, he's right hyar in ther Tin Horn."

That was the unique name of the saloon as a sign over its door indicated in staggering letters of various shapes and sizes, underscored by the rude drawing of a long tin coach-horn.

"Will you request him to step out here for a moment?" Dick directed. "Tell him a stranger has a couple of prisoners to turn over to him, a pair of rascals of the first water, evidently."

The music had stopped, and at that moment a rather fine-looking man stepped out upon the piazza.

"Hyar he are, now," announced the 'citizen' who was on the point of carrying out Dick's request. "This hyar are Honorable Hamp, Mayor of Burnt Match, sir."

"You want to see me?" the mayor asked.

At his appearance Viola Tazewell had given a slight start, and her hand went up to her veil, as if to make sure it was in place.

"Yes, I asked for you, sir," responded Dick. "Here are two rascals who made an attempt to capture this lady this afternoon, and but for me and my man might have succeeded."

"The scamps!" the mayor exclaimed, with a show of indignation. "I guess Burnt Match will know how to deal with them. We'll put them in the jug, and to-morrow we'll give them a trial, with all the chances in favor of their necks being stretched."

"I think it is a clear case against them," Dick observed, and he gave an account of the matter in full.

"A clear case!" echoed the mayor, with increased indignation; "I should say it is. If we don't settle with you, my festive bucks, then I miss my guess."

Forthwith he ordered the prisoners to the lock-up, and several men sprung to do his bidding. The prisoners were hustled off without any waste of words, in spite of their objections.

When they had been taken in charge, Dick made inquiry concerning a hotel, and learned that the hotel of the town, the Mansion House, was just across the street. Accordingly the three turned in that direction, and Prince Dick sprung out of the saddle as soon as they stopped, and assisted the young woman to dismount.

Barney at once took charge of her horse, and thanking him, and with a gracious bow to Darrel, she tripped lightly up the steps and disappeared into the house.

Dick gave his deputy some brief instructions, and leaving him with the horses, went into the bar-room, which was also the office of the establishment.

The mayor had followed across the street, and entered just behind him.

A rather fine-looking man, as said, Hampton Warde was. He appeared to be about thirty-five years of age, was dark complexioned, and wore a short, black beard, and his attire was a rough, but well-fitting business suit.

He seemed to take an interest in Dick. As the latter passed into the light, and as he crossed over to the desk, the mayor had his eyes upon him. What his interest was did not then appear, but he seemed to be looking at him as though wondering where he had seen him before.

Dick made his wants known to the landlord, and being informed that they could be accommodated, drew the register to him and affixed his name and that of his recently engaged servant.

While he was writing, the mayor stepped up and looked on, having something further to say respecting the prisoners Dick had brought in.

It was patent, though, that he was interested to learn the name of the stranger.

Dick registered his name as "R. Prince Darrel."

When he had done he dropped the pen, fixed

his glass in his eye, and responded to the mayor's remark.

That eye-glass made a wonderful alteration in his looks, and if the mayor had been under the impression that he had seen him before, he apparently dismissed it from mind now.

While they were talking, Barney O'Linn came in and announced that the horses had received proper care. This reminded Dick of the young woman, and he spoke to the proprietor. That gentleman hastened out to see her, but in a few minutes returned to say she could not be found. The woman had disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

DICK MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"WHAT name did she give you, sir?" inquired the mayor.

"She told me her name was Viola Tazewell," Prince Dick made response.

"Oh, well, she can't be long missing; she'll appear after awhile, no doubt. See you later."

With that the mayor went out, going back across the street to the saloon, and Dick turned again to the proprietor of the house.

Dick Darrel was of the same opinion as the mayor. He did not think then that the young woman had disappeared for good. And the proprietor, too, was of the same mind.

Dick and Barney were hungry—hungry as famished pirates, as Barney put it; and supper being soon ready for them, they were shown into the dining-room, where they proceeded to do justice to the spread.

While they were eating, another person was ushered into the room.

This was a slender, rather dudish-looking youth of twenty or thereabouts; a fellow with his hair parted in the middle, sporting a delicate mustache, and wearing student spectacles.

Darrel and Barney glanced at him casually, but did not give him any particular attention, and he ate his supper in silence. He was still eating when Dick and his man arose from the table and passed out of the room.

Dick stepped to the desk to inquire whether the missing young woman had yet made her appearance, and as he put the question, curiosity led him to glance at the register to learn who the new arrival was. He found another name added to the list, that of E. Chauncey Howe.

Much to his surprise he was told that the young woman had not returned, and what was more, that no one in the house had seen her at all. If she had entered (and Dick was positive on that point), then she must have gone out again immediately, or she would have been noticed by some one. There was something mysterious about it, and Dick was puzzled.

"Sure it b'ates dhe divil himsel!" exclaimed Barney O'Linn. "Phwere do ye imagine she can 'av' gone to, Misther Darrel?"

"That is more than I can say, Barney," Dick responded. "Suppose you just go out to the stables and see if her horse is there yet, will you?"

"Oi will dhat same, begob!" and Barney started. "Sure it is more av a puzzle to me dhe more Oi tink av it, so it is. Oi don't see phwy she should go off loike dhat."

As Barney left the room the mayor of the town came in.

He crossed over to the desk and put the same inquiry Dick had made, and naturally received a like answer.

This seemed to puzzle him even more than it had Prince Dick and his man. He looked at Darrel as though he expected him to offer an explanation forthwith.

Dick had adjusted his glass in his eye, and was surveying the mayor with something of the same manner. Again that expression as of interest in Dick came for a moment upon the Honorable Hampton's face.

"This is rather a strange thing, it strikes me," he, the mayor, observed. "I cannot account for it. Not that I am interested, you know, beyond the fact that her adventure has awakened a passing interest; but it is strange what has become of her."

"I can't believe that any harm has befallen her," remarked Dick. "I think she must have gone away suddenly, with a good reason for it, or has merely stepped out to a store, intending to return later. My attendant has gone to the stable to ascertain whether her horse is there or not."

The dude, E. Chauncey Howe, entered from the dining-room while Dick was speaking.

Mayor Ward's eyes fell upon him as he came forward into the room, and the mayor looked at him in even a more searching way than he had at Dick Darrel.

The young man was idly picking his teeth,

and gave no more than a passing glance at the mayor in return. He seemed a very peaceable youth, evidently one who attends strictly to his own business.

"Who is that fellow?" the mayor demanded of the proprietor.

"More than I can tell you," was the answer. "All I know about him is his name, and there it is."

He indicated the register as he spoke, and the Honorable Hampton glanced at it. The name caused a smile of contempt to part his lips.

"The name and the owner go well together," he remarked. "One is about as dudish as the other."

The youth passed on, presently stopping to read a notice posted on the wall, one which Dandy Dick had previously observed.

It was a reward offered for the capture of the outlaw and road-agent, "Devil Duval." The amount was a thousand dollars, and the notice was signed by the Mayor of Burnt Match.

Barney O'Linn returned as the Mayor uttered the words last quoted, and informed his master that the young woman's horse was in the stable.

Some further comment was made upon her disappearance, and presently Dandy Dick turned the conversation in another channel, and not without an object, hidden though it was.

"By the way," he remarked, "I see you offer a reward for that outlaw, Devil Duval, and that reminds me to mention something of importance. At any rate it is something that demands investigation."

"What is it?" the mayor asked. "Has this road-agent been relieving you of your money and valuables? But, I know I am wrong there, for he would never have allowed you to retain your pin and ring. What is it, then? If it is anything that I should take hold of, rest assured that I will do it."

"I refer to a horrible discovery that I and my man here made this afternoon. He is of the opinion that it was the work of this Devil Duval."

"What was it? If a dead man by the way-side, it is nothing new or startling to us. We find one occasionally, where a pilgrim has been so foolish as to resist this devil—this Devil Duval."

"Worse than that," Dick declared, earnestly. And he proceeded to tell the mayor all about it, the mayor listening attentively to the end.

"Heavens! but that was awful!" was the exclamation. "It must be investigated. Was there no means of identifying the woman or the child?"

"None whatever," was the assurance. "We searched the bodies, at any rate I did, but nothing of importance was to be found."

"Ugh!" ejaculated Barney, "me blood runs cold at dhe t'ought av it. Sure it was horrible indade."

"And it looks like the work of that devil," the mayor declared. "I'll double my reward this minute. His career must be cut short, and that as soon as possible. He has laughed defiance at us long enough."

He took a heavy pencil from his pocket as he spoke, and crossing the room, marked a large figure "2" over the word "one," and underscoring his name at the bottom. And while he was doing this the dude, E. Chauncey Howe, made a keen and searching scrutiny of his face.

Dandy Dick noticed this, and it led to his taking a more careful observation of the dude. He noted further that his hands were clinched tightly, and— But suddenly, with lightning quickness, a revelation came to him, and a smile half-parted his lips at the discovery.

"There!" the Honorable Hampton Warde cried, as he stepped back, "we'll see what the effect of that will be."

"Begorra," commented Dick's handy-man, "it won't have half dhe effect dhat a dose av buckshot at short range would have, an' dhat Oi'm sayin'."

"Perhaps not, my man," the mayor agreed, "but the trouble is, Mr. Devil Duval is very cautious, and never makes his appearance where there is a ghost of a chance of over-taking him."

The mayor talked for some time longer with Darrel, without any apparent point in view, so far as Dick could see.

Finally he took leave, and, as Dick noticed, returned to the Tin Horn Saloon across the way.

Dick had noticed that the dude had his eyes upon the mayor, and after a little while the youth followed after him, crossing the street and entering the saloon.

Again that suggestive smile half-parted Dick's lips. What it meant, only he himself knew, but

it was not lost upon his keen-eyed attendant. Barney took note of it, and later on was not surprised when the Prince proposed going over to the saloon for a little while before retiring.

"I'm wid ye, be gob!" he cried. "Sure it is ripe fur a little fun Oi am, an' av dhere's a ruction afoot, begorra but it is Barney O'Linn dhat will take a hand in dhe same av he is called upon. I'm wid ye, cl'ane down to dhe boots, Mister Darrel."

CHAPTER VI.

IN LADY TIGER'S LAIR.

BURNT MATCH was a town of considerable importance in its own estimation.

It boasted two or three hotels, any number of saloons—mark of advancing civilization! and several stores and shops of various sorts.

Of the saloons, the "Tin Horn" ranked first; as the "Mansion House" held first place among the hotels. It had its bar, its dancing-hall, and its gambling-den, all under one roof.

Gambling had always been a feature at Burnt Match. It had had its ups and downs, but on the whole the demand for that sort of thing had ever been active, and the market reasonably steady. Now it was away "up;" enjoying quite a boom.

This state of things had been brought about by the arrival at Burnt Match, a few months prior to the time of our story, of a gambler queen who made herself known at her table as "Lady Tiger." She was a rather handsome woman, with many charms of person and manner.

About thirty years of age, apparently, and certainly no older; handsome and charming, as stated; she had immediately become a popular feature. Her bank was well patronized every evening, from opening to closing, and her game certainly had the one merit of being honestly conducted. One of her most constant patrons was the mayor of the town.

Honorable Hampton Warde had fallen a victim to the Lady Tiger's charms at almost first sight. And not being discouraged upon his first advances, had danced attendance upon her ever since. Nor did she seem in any wise adverse to his attentions, so far as the lookers-on were able to judge. The woman's name, it came to be known, was Marian Athwood. No one knew anything further about her, unless it was the mayor, but it was understood that she was from the Pacific Coast.

As Dandy Dick Darrel and Barney O'Linn left the hotel to cross the street, the music in the Tin Horn struck up, and the shuffling of dancing feet was heard.

"Sure it is dancin' dhey are!" exclaimed the young Irishman. "Av Oi can't taych thim a ting or two at dhat, begorra Oi'll ate me head."

"Perhaps you will have a chance," remarked Dick. "I suppose it is free to all, as they await their turn."

They went on, ascended the piazza and entered the open doors, passing around the screens.

A scene of wild enjoyment instantly met their gaze, and they paused to look.

On the left hand was the bar, with several customers ranged along its front, doing credit to the place and injury to themselves. On the right, in the corner, was a barrel organ, out of which a tough-looking citizen was grinding the lively strains of a waltz. On the floor were half a score of couples, dancing with varying degrees of grace.

Among the dancers were several women, for the most part hard-looking creatures with brazen faces, to be truthful about it; but, there was evidently not enough of these to go around, for in several instances men were dancing together as partners, and seeming to enjoy it just as well.

Further back was a partition, built up to within a couple of feet of the ceiling, with double doors in the center. Over these doors was a sign indicating that beyond was the gambling room of the establishment.

Dick and Barney stood and witnessed the dancing until the music ceased and the couples repaired to the bar, when they went forward across the floor and entered the apartment beyond.

Dick's rather elegant attire had attracted a good deal of attention, and "My! but ain't he a dandy!" was heard whispered here and there among the crowd.

On passing through the double doors the scene immediately changed. Here a carpet covered the floor, and there was some attempt at display in furniture and fittings.

Opposite the door was a long, green-covered table, behind which sat the Lady Tiger, like a

queen upon her throne. She was richly dressed in velvet, and diamonds sparkled in her hair and at her throat. She glanced up when the door opened, and gave a searching look at Dandy Dick as he stepped in.

At first sight of her, Darrel felt himself give a slight start. He thought he recognized in her some likeness to some one he had known. But, the next instant seemed to convince him he was in error. There was no outward sign of this, and no one could have guessed his thought of the moment. He made no pause, but advanced toward the table, like any idle spectator.

Behind the table, at the right hand of the queen, sat Mayor Warde.

He was not playing just then, and gave Dick a sign of recognition, with that questioning expression again in his eyes.

In front of the table, and opposite the mayor, while yet behind the players seated on that side, stood the dude, E. Chauncey Howe. He seemed to be watching the game with intense interest.

"Thought you would drop into the Tin Horn, did you, eh?" the mayor greeted, as Dick stepped up.

"Yes, I thought I would come over for a few minutes and see what was going on, sir," responded Darrel, fixing his glass in his eye.

That eyeglass again seemed to dispel whatever doubt had been trying to gain foothold in the mayor's mind, if there really had been any such. The questioning look immediately vanished.

"Well, there's nothing in the camp can hold a candle to the Tin Horn now," he declared. "Our Lady Tiger here is the attraction of our town at present. Do you ever tempt the fickle goddess, Fortune?"

"Aw, no, sir; gambling is something that I know very little about," Dick responded with an airish drawl. "No harm to look on, I suppose, eh?"

"No harm whatever, sir," the Lady Tiger graciously made answer. "Unless," she added, "by looking on you become tempted to play."

"An' divil a worse harrum could happen ye nor dhat same, says Oi," chipped in Barney O'Linn.

"Here is one gentleman who will not agree with you, I am sure," remarked the card queen, indicating one of the players.

This fellow was a rough-looking customer, uncouth and unkempt, clad like a miner but armed like a pirate. He had a big pile of chips in front of him, and every play added to it. He had had an uninterrupted run of good luck ever since the bank opened.

"Right you are, Lady Tiger!" the fellow cried. "If there are any harm in a feller's makin' his hay while ther sun shines, then I don't know what I'm talkin' about. Hyar goes fur ther tray, this time," and he put some chips on the card mentioned, and the draw was made.

Again he had won, and he howled with delight over it.

"Call this hyar harm to a feller, do yer?" he cried, turning to Barney. "Yer had better chip in an' foller my lead for a leetle while."

"Sure it is a long lane dhat has never a turn in it, so it is," Barney philosophized. "Dame Fortune will be a-turbin' av her face dhe other way, purthy soon, an' dhen av ye don't change yer chune Oi'm no prophet, dhat's all."

The fellow was too busy with his playing to make further response, and the game proceeded in silence for a time, his run of luck still remaining unbroken. He had gone in with only a dollar, as had been whispered around, and now was bidding fair to weaken the bank, if he kept on.

"Your run of good fortune is remarkable, sir!" the card queen exclaimed, after the last draw. "Lucky for me you have not a large capital at your command, or you would certainly ruin me."

This was said in a smiling way, but Dandy Dick Darrel could see that there was much in the words. The remark had the genuine ring; it meant all that the words went to imply. "If it keeps on pilin' up, durn me if I won't have a capital afore long," the fellow responded, "an' then mebbe I'll clip your purty claws, Lady Tiger. Haw, haw, haw! That would be amusin', now wouldn't it?"

"It would no doubt be highly amusing for you, sir," was the laughing response, while the woman arranged the cards for another deal.

When she was ready, she called upon the players to make their play.

"How are you going to begin this time, Red-nose Mike?" the mayor of the camp playfully asked, addressing the lucky player. "I am interested to see how long this paying vein is going to hold out."

"I'm goin' ter do it jest so, Honorable Hamp,"

was the answer, and with the words the fellow put down a goodly stack of chips upon the deuce. "Let'er flicker, now," he added, to the fair dealer.

"If you don't object, sir, spoke up a timid voice, "I will follow your lead for a turn, and see how it will make a fellah feel to win a stake at cards. May I try, sir?"

The man called Red-nose Mike wheeled to see who had spoken, and every one else in the room looked in the same direction. The speaker was none other than the youthful dude, E. Chauncey Howe, who stood with a bill in hand ready to make a purchase of some chips.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK TAKES A HAND.

MANY other players had dropped out of the game now.

Too genteel, some of them, to follow the lead of such a man as Red-nose Mike, and not wanting to play a losing game any longer, they had preferred to withdraw.

Some others had taken their places, fellows of about Mike's stamp, and these did not hesitate to place their chances where Mike placed his. It was a condition of things that the card queen did not like, as could be seen.

"Kin yer foller my lead, leetle cuss?" Mike repeated, after a survey of the dude; "wal, I reckons yer kin, if yer has got ther tin. Yer had better take them 'ar winder-lights down from yer eyes, though, afore yer begins, fer this hyar ain't no game ter stand in ther house an' play out o' doors."

This created a laugh among the roughs in the room, and the hot blood came to the dude's face.

Dandy Dick noted this, and noticed also that the youth's hand trembled slightly as he passed his money over in exchange for chips.

When the chips had been received, E. Chauncey placed some of them upon the deuce where the others had theirs, and the Lady Tiger proceeded with the business of dealing.

Several cards came out, and finally a deuce—for the bank!

"Blazes!" cried Red-nose Mike, "but I got it that time, an' got it bad! But never say die, is my motto, an' hyar goes fer another whack."

"Pbwat did Oi tell ye a minute ago?" reminded Barney O'Linn. "Didn't Oi say it is a long lane dhat has never a turn in it, or somethin' to dhat effect? Begorra, but av ye are wise ye will call dhe halt roight phwere ye are."

"You jest 'tend to yer own business, young feller, and never mind mine," Red-nose Mike turned half around to say. "I am playing this game, I ruther opine."

"Divil a peep more will ye hear out av me," was the good-natured rejoinder. "Oi'm as mum as a clam. Go on wid yer sport."

Having lost, the man doubled the amount he had ventured before, and tried his luck again.

The dude took pattern after him, and followed his lead as before.

Another turn was had, and again did the bank win.

Red-nose Mike fairly howled now.

"Snakes an' lizards!" he cried, "but I guess I'm in fer it, sure! What in the blazes is ther matter with my luck? Here, we'll try it again, anyhow."

He made another play, this time taking another card, and again he doubled to make sure of recovering his lost ground if he won. The dude followed his lead as before.

Dick Darrel was observing him, and noticed that his hand trembled still more as he laid the last of his chips upon the card.

Barney O'Linn was eager to see the boasting fellow lose again, though he did not like the idea of the others losing with him. That was their business, however, if they would play.

Once more the cards were drawn, and again did the bank win.

Red-nose Mike swore roundly, using language far more forcible than polite, until the mayor ordered him to desist.

The dude had turned away, with a sigh, the moment the card appeared, and to Dandy Dick that sigh was in the manner of a revelation. He believed the fellow had lost all the money he had.

Suddenly Red-nose Mike sprung up with a howl.

"Whar's that 'ar durn dude?" he cried. "He's a durn no mascot, that's what he are, a mascot of ther wrong sort. I had a straight run o' luck till he chipped in on my place, an' then I lost. Hyar, you little jigger! come right back hyar, fur I'm goin' ter spank yer."

E. Chauncey had stopped, and now looked at the bearded pirate in a frightened manner.

"I—I asked you if I might follow your lead."

sir," he reminded. "I had nothing to do with your change of luck; nothing whatever, sir."

"Yer is a liar, cuss yer! Yer must 'a' knowed yer was a Joner. Come, take off them 'ar winkers, an' let me give yer some stirrup oil wi' ther leg o' me boot. I reckon I kin curse yer."

The dude backed away, in great alarm.

"I—I—I assure you, sir, that I am not responsible for your losing. I never played before, and was tempted to it by seeing your luck. Please don't punish me for it, sir; please don't. I'm sorry, and if I had—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Please don't spank yer, hey? That are good, durn me if it ain't. Did ye heer that, fellers? Don't spank him— Haw, haw, haw! That's jest what I'm goin' ter do, sonny, an' don't yer forget it. It's purty sartain that yer won't ferget it when I'm done."

With that he stepped forward to lay hands upon the trembling youth.

Dandy Dick had been paying close attention to all this, and was moving now to a place nearer the young man.

Barney O'Linn, too, had been observing all, and in fact so had everybody; and in a whisper to Dick he had remarked:

"Sure it is a shame fur dhat big blatherskite to be imposin' upon a b'y loike dhat. Av he touches him, begorra but he'd ought to be larruped himsel', so he had."

"Let him alone," Dick quietly responded. "I'll attend to him. I have my eye upon the fellow."

"You!" Barney exclaimed in amazement. "Sure it's eatin' av ye up he'd be doin'. Ye had better be leavin' av him alone, Misther Prince, an' Oi'm tellin' ye so."

Dick smiled in a confident way.

"Don't let that worry you, Barney," he said lightly. "I will take care of him, and you needn't take a hand in unless you see me downed."

There was no time to say more, for then it was that Dick moved forward to the place where the trembling dude was standing.

Barney looked after him, with a shake of the head, and gave a hitch at his sleeves, preparatory for business.

Red-nose Mike had noticed nothing of this, and it would have made no difference to him if he had. He stepped forward, assaid, and reached out to grip the dude, who drew back to escape.

"Durn yer, come hyar!" the frowzy ruffian ordered. "If yer don't, durn me if I don't shake yer like—"

With the words, he sprung forward, making another grab to get hold of the object of his anger, but he was suddenly interrupted by having some one lay a hand upon his shoulder and jerk him around with a quickness that almost dislocated his neck.

The fellow found himself facing Dandy Dick, who, with his glass in his eye, stood coolly looking at him.

For a moment Red-nose Mike was too amazed to speak. It did not seem possible that it could have been this dandy who had dared to lay a hand upon him. And yet it was the fact.

"Durn your pictur!" he exclaimed, "was it you what done that? Guess you don't know who I be, do yer?"

"No, I haven't the honor of your acquaintance," Dick quietly responded, "but I'm the person who presumed to draw your attention this way. You ought to feel ashamed of yourself to threaten a youth like that."

"Orter feel 'shamed of it, had I? Wal, now, Mister Dandy, mebbly you are jest itchin' ter take it up fer him. You is jest a little bigger 'n he is; s'pose you let me spank you fu'st? That will git my hand in good practice fur ther other feller. What d'yer say about that?"

"You are welcome to try it on, if you want to," was the almost unconcerned response. "You certainly shall not lay a hand upon that young man while I can lift an arm to defend him."

The highest kind of excitement now prevailed.

The mayor, Lady Tiger, and everybody else, were upon their feet, and trouble was looked for immediately.

Barney O'Linn had taken a place just behind his master, ready to pitch in at the first sign of Dick's getting the worst of it.

"Oh—ho!" mocked the bristling giant, "that's ther sort of a dandy you be, are it! Want folks ter think yer is somebody, does yer! 'Cause yer wears a b'iled shirt an' a stovepipe, yer thinks yer is a highfalutin' rip-snorter, mebbly. Take that fur a starter!" and reaching out quickly, he made a slap at Dick's face. It was a smart blow, too, but Darrel turned his head and escaped the force of it. Quick as a wink, then,

Dick sprung at him, turned him over so easily that it did not seem to cost any effort whatever, and actually stood him on his head, holding him by one foot, the top of his head resting upon the floor. It was a surprise to every one who witnessed it, and must have been more than a surprise to the blustering ruffian.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END OF THE FRACAS.

MAYOR HAMPTON WARDE looked at Dandy Dick with almost paling face, that expression of recognition coming again into his eyes with more distinctness than ever, and his gaze seemed riveted.

In his sudden exertion, Dandy Dick's glass had dropped from his eye and hung dangling by its string, and his face had a new look. His expression for the moment was not unlike it had been at the time of his terrible recognition of the murdered ones in the wild canyon.

And as the mayor looked at him his muscles swelled out, his hands clinched, and his jaws set themselves firmly, as though his leading thought was that of attacking the dandy stranger then and there. No one noticed these things, however, and in another moment it had all passed away.

Barney O'Linn was the most excited man present, perhaps. This revelation of his newfound master's strength and courage surprised and delighted him beyond degree. It was something he had never dreamed of.

"Whoop!" he cried, "but you are dhe dandy, Prince Dick. Sure dhe man dhat picks yez up fur a flat will be afther droppin' ye fur a sharp, mighty quick, so he will. Begorra, but dhis bates anythin' dhat Oi ever set me two eyes on, so it does."

The disgraced Red-nose Mike was bellowing like an angry bull, demanding to be released and given a fair chance at his enemy.

Dandy Dick was now smiling again, and taking care that the fellow did not get hold of a weapon, held his foot with one hand while he replaced his eyeglass. And that done, he gave the fellow a spin around on his head, gave his heels a push, and let him fall to the ground.

Red-nose Mike came down with a force that jarred the building, and with a roar like that of a wounded bison he immediately made a hasty scramble to get upon his feet.

"Oh, sir, you will be killed!" cried E. Chauncey Howe, in great alarm, as he ran forward, as though to lend his feeble assistance.

"I have little fear of that," was Dick's assurance. "You keep back out of the way and look out for yourself."

"Divil a bit will he be gettin' hurted, no more he will!" shouted Barney.

"I'll show yer whether he won't or not!" screamed the enraged pirate—so to call him. "I'm goin' ter see yer liver, dandy; d'ye onderstand that? Yer liver!"

And on he came with a rush, reaching for a knife as he came.

"Just hold on a little till we argue that point," requested Dick, coolly, a brace of revolvers springing into his hands from—nobody could tell where. "The company present might object to such an exhibition. Can't you modify your intentions just a little, and not go to such a horrible extreme?"

The rascal had stopped, with his face almost against the cold muzzles, and was staring at the cool dandy with mouth and eyes agape.

Barney O'Linn almost went wild. He had his hat off and was swinging it wildly, while he executed a double-shuffle then and there.

"Och! but you are dhe b'y, Misthur Darrel; sure ye are!" he cried. "Divil a wan av me would have t'ought it was in yez, no more Oi would. Whoop! Come on, yez unwashed hyena, yez! Now is yer chance to show phwat yez can do, so it is. Phwat is dhe matther wid yez—anyhow?"

"See here, I think we have had about enough of this," here put in Honorable Hamp, speaking to Red-nose Mike. "If you know when you are well off, Red-nose, you will get out of here as soon as you can. You have met more than your match, it seems. Don't be a fool now, but git."

This was gall and wormwood to the fellow, but it seemed to be about the best thing that opened for him at that moment.

"You have given him a lesson that he will probably remember, sir," the mayor added, addressing Dick.

"That remains to be seen," observed Dick.

"What are you going to do about it my man?"

"Oh! I gives it up fer this time, I does," the fellow blurted out. "Yer has got ther dirty drop on me, an' I ain't got no show. I'll bear this in mind though you bet, an' you'll hear from me later."

"All right, any time that suits you. Not that I want to have any trouble with you, but I have a way of chipping in on the weak side of a bad situation every time, and I warn you to leave this youth severely alone. He had nothing to do with your sudden change of luck."

"That's my business, what I'll do with him," was the growl, as the ruffian backed away from the threatening weapons. "Hyar, Lady Tiger, cash ther balance o' my chips an' I'll slope fer ther present."

"With pleasure, sir," was the gracious response, and the exchange was quickly made.

Cramming his money into his pocket, and giving one look of hatred at Dandy Dick, the fellow passed out into the other room of the place.

"Sure, sor, but dhat was dhe n'atest Oi ever seen in me loife!" Barney O'Linn found it impossible to help exclaiming. "Sure Oi never t'ought it was in yez, no more Oi did." And, the weapons having disappeared out of Dick's grasp, he seized his hand and shook it heartily.

"I am sorry that trouble should have occurred in my parlor," remarked the card queen, "but you were entirely in the right in interfering to protect this youth. I congratulate you upon your strength and nerve. Did you ever see anything to surpass it, Mr. Warde?"

"No, I never did," was the hearty agreement on the part of the mayor. "You are a team, sir, and no mistaking the fact. Men of Burnt Match, I propose that we give the stranger a suitable badge to wear on his name. What shall it be?"

Instantly a howl of approval went up.

The loud words, it must be understood, had attracted attention from the other room, and the gambler queen's den was about full.

"Hold on a minute, before you go any further with that idea," here put in the stranger. "I happen to have a handle to my name already, and if it is all the same to you I don't care to have another."

"What are it?" was the demand. "What are it? Let's hear what yer every-day name is, anyhow!"

"Well, I am known as Dandy Dick," was the explanation. "If you are satisfied with that—"

"Jest ther ticket!" was the howl. "Nothin' better'n that, you bet! You is a dandy, fer a fact, an' Dandy Dick it are."

"Good enough," agreed the mayor. "And now, boys, I would suggest that we give three cheers and a tiger for Dandy Dick. What do you say about that?"

This struck approval immediately, and the cheers were given with a hearty expression, and with several tigers attached. And then was added a hiss for Red-nose Mike, whose stock in the market had taken a sudden fall.

Dick was the center of attraction in the saloon, and Mayor Warde seemed to have taken to him with unusual fervor. During that time the playing at the table was at a standstill, and the Lady Tiger apparently seconded the mayor in extending good-will to Dick.

Gradually the excitement cooled down. The playing was resumed, and Darrel turned his attention to the dude who had been the innocent cause of it all.

Dick had kept an eye upon him, to see that he did not leave the room, for he desired to speak to him before he lost sight of him.

Leaving Barney looking at the playing, Dick stepped apart to where the dude was standing.

E. Chauncey appeared to be decidedly downcast, and eyed Dick curiously as he approached.

Dick drew quite near before speaking, and then addressed the youth in whisper, almost.

And the effect was magical. With a start the young man turned first white, then red, and gasped:

"You know me, then?"

"Yes, I know you," Dick assured. "And I am going to ask you a plain question, too. I believe you lost your last dollar at the table. Am I right?"

"It is the truth," was the answer, the flush upon his face deepening. "That fellow's run of success tempted me to try to increase my funds a little, and I made the venture."

"Accept this, then, from me," Dick urged, extending some bills, secretly. "I insist upon it. Yes, as a loan, if you will; and never mind about when you are to repay it. If you want more, or need a friend, call upon me."

And with that Darrel thrust the roll in the dude's hand and turned away. Soon after he and Barney left the saloon to return to the hotel.

CHAPTER IX.

A TRAGEDY AND ITS FRUIT.

NATURALLY, the two thought their adventures of the evening were over, but they were mistaken.

Barney was dilating upon Dandy Dick's great exploit, as he termed it, and they were half way across the street when a shot was heard behind them.

Before Barney could turn his head, Dick had wheeled, his weapons in his hands. With the shot, he had felt and heard a bullet dart through his tall hat.

The next second another shot came, and the bullet that time just escaped hitting the Prince's ear. But it was not followed by a third. Dick saw the flash, and in the same instant his own revolver spit fire in that direction.

The shot was followed immediately by a groan, and a man staggered out from the shadow of the Tin Horn, falling upon his face on the sidewalk.

"May dhe devil fly away wid dhe omadhoun!" cried Barney O'Linn. "Av Oi had me musketoon wid me, begorra it is dispersin' av his carcass Oi'd be doin', so Oi would. Have ye killed him, sor?"

"It is very probable that I have," was the response. "I fired it to kill. In a severe and acute case like that, the remedy must be prompt and effective. I didn't care to risk another of his shots; they were too close to be pleasant."

Dick was retracing his steps, now, toward the spot where the would-be assassin lay.

Men were coming from every direction, attracted by the firing, and by the time Dick and his man reached the side of their fallen foe, quite a crowd was collecting.

Dandy Dick pulled the man over upon his back, and saw that it was Red-nose Mike.

"Ha! what's this about?" demanded the mayor, pushing his way to the front.

"It means that I came near being murdered by this ruffian," was Dick's answer. "I checked him just in time."

"What! was Red-nose Mike trying to kill you?"

"That he was. He sent one bullet through my hat, and another almost clipping my ear, and I thought it was about time to protest."

"Thunder! I should say so. I guess you have fixed him."

"It looks like it. Just look and see where he is hurt, or where the bullet took effect, will you, Barney?"

"Dhat same Oi will, sor. Sure Oi reckon dherr will be a funeral here dhe morrow, an' dhe town so much betther off fur dhe gone av dhe spalpeen."

While speaking, he knelt beside the fallen man and opened his clothes, quickly but not roughly, and as he did so a very much soiled letter dropped out of a pocket in plain sight.

They were right under one of two lamps that were in front of the Tin Horn, and light was plenty. As the letter came in sight, its superscription was up to view, and what was the amazement of Barney O'Linn to see that it was addressed to himself!

"A letther fur mesel', be hivvins!" he cried, snatching it up and ending his Good Samaritan proceedings instantly. "It is directed to Barney O'Linn, an' dhat same is me, begorra! How in all batheration did a letther fur me come into dhe possession av a gorilla loike dhat?"

Barney's amazement was too much for him, and every one else looked on in the same surprise. Dick Darrel felt a keen interest in the matter, for he could discern that Barney was moved more deeply than the mere finding of such a letter could account for. What did it mean? For the moment the man at their feet was neglected.

Barney looked at his find on all sides, and after that, hastily tore it open. He sought the signature immediately, and as soon as it met his eyes an ejaculation broke from his lips.

"At last!"

That was his exclamation, the words escaping him in a hoarse whisper.

All standing immediately near, overheard, and Dandy Dick looked at his man with increasing interest.

"Av dherr is a shpark av loife in dhat man, begorra Oi want him to shpake!" the young Irishman cried. "He houlds a sacret dhat Oi must have out av him."

Again he dropped upon his knees beside the body, and made haste to go on with the search he had begun.

In another moment the wound was laid bare. The bullet had entered Red-nose Mike's breast, and it looked as though it had been immediately fatal.

"I guess he is done for, Barney," Dandy Dick observed. "It's too bad, for I hate to have blood on my hands, but in this case the fellow was to blame, and I would do the same again."

"Och, yez were roight enough in doin' dhat same," Barney agreed, "but under dhe circumstances Oi would loike yez hadn't kilted him quite so dead all at wanst. Oi wonder av he has anythin' more about his clothes dhat belongs to me?"

With the thought search was made, but nothing more was found.

About the time Barney was done, Red-nose Mike's breast heaved, and a sigh escaped him.

"Begorra but he is aloive yet!" the young Irishman cried. "Can yez heer phwat Oi am sayin' at yez, ye spalpeen!" he demanded, shouting into the wounded knave's ear.

"You'll never get anything out of him that way, my man," spoke up the mayor, now interfering. "We'll carry the fellow into the saloon, and if he comes to so that he can speak, I will get out of him whatever he knows."

"But it is questionin' av him mesel' Oi want to be doin'," Barney protested. "Yez have no knowledge av phwat Oi would be askin' him, no more ye have. He houlds some knowledge phat Oi would be givin' av me roight hand to be gettin' out av him, and Oi hope yez will lave him roight phwere he is fur dhe present."

"No, it won't do," the mayor objected. "Mike is human, if he was a bad egg, and we won't let him lie here like a dog. Pick him up, some of you, and carry him in. He must have care at once."

"The mayor is right, Barney," agreed Dandy Dick. "Let the man be carried in, and if a little liquor is given him it may revive him long enough to say something, if he will speak. He won't live, though; that hole is in a bad place."

Men had already lifted the dying—almost dying—man from the ground, and he was carried into the saloon.

Dick and Barney followed, and as they entered the Irishman observed:

"Dhe mayor seemed to take intherest in dhe man moighty suddint loike. Never a wurrd did he say till dhe man showed loife in him."

"It would have been of no use trying to do anything for a dead man," Dandy Dick reminded.

"Come to think of it, dhat's so," Barney assented.

Red-nose Mike was carried to the rear of the room, and there laid on a table, and the mayor called for whisky.

Some of the article—so called—was quickly brought, and when a little of the poison had been poured into the wounded man's mouth, he presently opened his eyes.

Barney had pressed his way to the front, forcibly, and Dandy Dick was somewhat in the rear, the crowd having got ahead of him.

When Mike opened his eyes, looking around him and groaning, Barney quickly demanded:

"Can ye shpake wid me, yez poor devil?"

"You had better let me question him," the mayor interfered.

"Phwat's dhe matther wid me doin' av it mesel', sor?" Barney demanded of him.

"Nothing, sir, nothing," was the response. "The man will answer questions from me much more promptly than he will from you, though."

"Well, Oi want to know how he came by dhis letther, and how long it has been in his possession," Barney urged. "Oi want to know who gave it to him, an' phwere dhe writer av it is."

"Let me see the letter," the mayor parleyed, holding out his hand.

"Divil a see!" Barney demurred. "Don't be wastin' av toime, av ye are goin' to be av any service to me."

"You needn't get huffy about it," was the cool reminder. "You seem to forget that I am at the head of affairs in this camp, and that I am offering to serve you."

"Oi don't m'ane to be huffy, sor, but ye can't ondershtand dhe anxious way Oi am in. It is divil a bit ye are servin' av me, an' ye don't be afther gettin' av dhe infurmashun Oi am wantin'."

"Then you refuse to let me see the letter?"

"Av coorse Oi do, till Oi have read it mesel' first, begorra!"

"Very well, then, do your own questioning. I'm of no use to you, I can see."

"Divil a bit at all, at all," and Barney turned again to the wounded man on the table.

Red-nose Mike had gone off into a faint and it looked as though he had breathed his last. The mayor had noticed this, and perhaps believed the man was dead, for he turned away and passed out of the saloon, favoring Dick with another of his keen, suspicious glances as he passed him.

CHAPTER X.

MAYOR HAMP MAKES LOVE.

RED-NOSE MIKE was not dead, but he was entering the Dark Valley.

He had come to a sudden and terrible end, but deserved it, and had brought it upon himself by his evil attempt upon Dandy Dick's life.

Darrel had now pressed to the front, and poured some more of the liquor between the fellow's lips, wanting to aid Barney all he could, knowing that there was something back of it more than appeared.

After some minutes the man opened his eyes again, uttered another groan, and looked about him.

As he did so, his eyes rested upon Dandy Dick, and a look of hatred came into them.

"Cuss yer," he faintly grated, "yer has done fur me."

"Your own fault," said Dick, pityingly.

"I'm sorry I didn't—didn't plug—"

He choked, and did not finish, but his meaning could be guessed.

"Ye are a dead man, ye poor devil ye," Barney O'Linn impressed, bending over the fellow, holding the letter so he could see it. "Will ye tell me phwere ye got dhis letther into yer possession?"

The fellow tried to raise himself up, as though he would grab at the letter, but fell back weak and powerless.

"I want—want—want a—doc—doctor," he panted.

"A doctor can't do anything for you," declared Dandy Dick. "You are past all help. If you have anything to say, you had better say it quick."

At this announcement a look of horror came into the rascal's face. Perhaps he had not fully realized his position before. The fear of death was upon him with all its awful force.

"I—I—the letter—I—never read—"

"Never moind dhat," cried Barney. "Who gave it to ye?"

"I—I—have been—a—a—bad man," the dying wretch gasped. "I—I—"

Seconds were precious now, and Barney O'Linn was almost wild. Why would not the man answer his question?

"Sure we all know dhat," Barney cried. "Answer dhe question Oi am askin' ye, an' ye hope to be furgiven av yer misdeeds. Who gave ye dhis letthur?"

"I—I—have been—one—one of Dev—Devil Duval's men. There—there's no furgiveness fur me. That cri—crime of this—this morning sends me—to—hell!"

"What crime do you mean?" demanded Dandy Dick, quickly.

"Shoot—shootin' that wo—woman an' ther—"

Again he choked and did not finish.

Dick and Barney exchanged a glance.

"But, dhe letther!" Barney urged. "Tell me about dhat—tell me, Oi beg av ye!"

The dying man tried to speak again, but now his strength was spent. Two or three attempts he made, and then suddenly a great gasp escaped him and he was dead.

"That settles it, Barney," remarked Dick, turning away. "The wretch has gone to face the great Judge of all. Come, let's go out, for I cannot remain in the same room with his body. You heard his confession."

"Oi did dhat same," Barney responded, as he followed, "an' may dhe Judge have mercy upon his soul."

"You ask more than I can," Dick responded. "He deserved the fate he met, and more. I am glad he fell by my hand. It is war to the teeth, Barney, between us and that band."

"Roight ye are!" cried Barney. They had now passed out of the saloon, and were crossing the street. "Oi only wish he had tould me somethin' about dhis letther. But Oi am on dhe roight thrack at last, t'ank hivvins, an' Oi hope soon to come face to face wid dhe—"

Something interrupted, and he did not finish then. They entered the hotel, and in a little while repaired to their room. There they had a long and earnest conversation, following the reading of the letter Barney had found, in which Barney told Dick his story in full, and Dick

pledged him his aid in righting a wrong he had suffered.

After the death of Red-nose Mike, the excitement gradually cooled, and the Tin Horn settled down to its natural condition.

The body had been carried away, to await its burial on the morrow, and in the minds of many the event had made no impression whatever, and the dead man was almost if not quite forgotten.

Groups of men here and there, however, talked about him, and especially about certain words that had dropped from his lips in his last moments. That he had been one of Devil Duval's men, was a surprise to them all. It was hard to realize that it was the truth.

When his career was looked into, however, it was seen that it was easily possible that he had played such a role, and his own dying statement bore such weight that it was soon accepted as the fact that he had figured as one of the Devil's Half-Dozen. But his career was at an end now, and the important question was, Were there any more of the band harbored in the town?

Mayor Warde was gone for some time, and only returned to the saloon about the time when the Lady Tiger was closing her bank for the night.

The Honorable Hampton made his way to her "parlor" immediately, and finding her there, smiled his pleasantest, as he remarked:

"Ha! I am glad I find you here. Was afraid I should find your bank closed, and you gone for the night."

"A little later and you would have realized your fears," was the pleasant reply.

"Then I am glad I am no later. I want to talk with you, Lady Tiger."

"Which you are welcome to do, I am sure," she returned. "Fire ahead, as the rough-and-ready invitation is."

"Yes, but I want to talk in private. May I accompany you over to the hotel, and will you stop a few moments in the parlor and give me an opportunity to say something of importance?"

"Why, yes, certainly. I shall be ready in a very few moments."

While speaking, the woman gathered up her chips and money, putting them into a band-bag, and took a brace of revolvers from a shelf just under the table and stuck them into a belt beneath her loose velvet jacket.

That done, she folded the table, drew a cloth over it, and was ready to go.

The mayor conducted her out through the saloon, offered his arm when they reached the street, and so led her across to the hotel and into the parlor.

There the woman sat down, inviting the mayor to do the same, and accepting a chair near her, the Honorable Hampton came at once to business.

"Miss Athwood, I have several times hinted that I love you. Now, I come right out bluntly and declare it, and ask you to marry me. What do you say to it? I hope you won't refuse."

"I hardly know how to answer you, Mr. Warde," the woman made response, and she held her eyes cast down, toying with the hem of her jacket.

"Then you don't refuse outright, and that is a big point gained, I take it. I love you Marian, and want you for my own. Can't you bring yourself to think well enough of me to marry me?"

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Warde—"

"Why not Hamp?" the mayor corrected.

"Very well. I will be frank with you, Hampton. I believe I do think well enough of you to marry you, but—"

"But what?" the mayor interrupted, all smiles. "Dast it, if that's the case, Marian, it seems to me that's all there is about it. Will you marry me?"

"Wait; you have not heard what I have to say."

"Well, let's hear it then."

"You call me Miss Athwood, and I have never corrected you; but the truth is, I am a widow."

"The dickens you are!"

The Honorable Hampton opened his eyes wide, and whistled softly.

"This is news!" he further exclaimed. "But, what's the odds?" he immediately added. "You're free to marry, ain't you?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly free, and I believe willing, too; but there is one point that I must weigh carefully before I give you your answer. I have a mission of vengeance to carry out, and I ought to remain free-handed until that is ended."

"Oh, I don't know about that," argued the

mayor. "What is it? Maybe I will be able to lend you big help. We'll make a strong team, Marian."

Thus invited, the Lady Tiger told her story, not giving real names, however; a precaution the mood of the moment led her to take. And the mayor listened attentively to the end. He showed interest—more than passing interest. And finally they separated, and the mayor was to have his answer on the morrow. A smile, a cunning, significant smile, was upon the Honorable Hamp's face as he repaired to the bar-room.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK FACES HIS SWORN FOE.

DANDY DICK DARREL had by this time discovered that he had indeed found a diamond in the rough in Barney O'Linn.

The assistant was jolly, and always ready, about twenty years of age, as he has been described. He was homely, but what he lacked in looks was made up in good sense.

As a prospector, he was acting an assumed role, for in reality he was playing the detective, looking for a lost sister and the rascal who had wrecked her life. The particulars of the matter are not germane to the interests of our present story.

Barney had last heard from her from a town in Colorado. In her letter she told him her sad story, and asked him to come and take her home. Barney had set out at once, but on arriving at the place from which the letter had been sent, found that she was no longer there.

No one could tell him where she had gone. She had been there some weeks, supporting herself by washing and mending clothes for the miners, but had suddenly disappeared. Everything indicated that she had gone off suddenly and without preparation. No one knew anything about her, and Barney was without a clew to her whereabouts. But he did not give up.

This sister, Nora by name, was older than he. He knew that she was as true as gold, and having sent for him to come to her, would not of her own free will have gone from the place as she had without leaving some word from him. He had written to her that he would start immediately, and now this letter which he had found in the possession of Red-nose Mike was addressed to him at the camp where she had been. He had immediately commenced search, going from town to town as a wandering prospector.

But now this letter made everything clear. Nora had been discovered in her retreat, by the man who had wronged her, and had been forcibly carried away by him and some others as bad as himself. She was now in the power of the band of outlaws, the Devil's Half-Dozen, a close prisoner, and obliged to cook and wash for the rascals. A favor she had done for one of them had encouraged her to intrust a letter with him to be mailed to Barney. And that one, needless to explain, had been Red-nose Mike, and the letter had never been out of his pocket.

This was the story, in brief, which Barney told Dick, and, as said, Dick promised his aid toward effecting the rescue of the lad's sister from the hands of the devils who had her in their power. As he had previously said, it was to be war to the teeth between them and the outlaw band.

From this story, too, Dandy Dick saw that Barney was an ally whom Providence seemed to have sent to him. With the cause he had against this outlaw band, he would be worth two men serving merely for pay. Their interests at present were identical, or almost.

Dick Darrel had prided himself upon being a good judge of faces, and the more he saw of Barney the stronger became his faith in his first impression of him. It seemed clear that he had made no mistake in his case.

It was quite late when the two finally retired to rest, and both being pretty well fagged out, they were not long in dropping into a sound sleep.

When they awoke, some time later still, it was with a start, and both sat up at the same instant and stared around.

About the bed stood four masked men, each with a brace of revolvers in hand, covering them.

"Utter one word, make the least alarm, and you are dead men!"

So one of the four hissed in whisper, and Dandy Dick and Barney realized that they were in something of a dilemma.

"Sure Oi'll not shpake," whispered Barney, hoarsely, "but phwat is it yez do be wantin' av us?"

"That's the question," added Dick. "To

whom do we owe the honor of this unexpected visit? What is wanted, gentlemen?"

"Hold your tongues, or you will not live long enough to learn," was the threatening retort. "Out of that bed and dress yourselves, soon as you can do it. We'll stand no fooling."

"As there seem to be no help for it, we'll have to do as you direct," cheerfully agreed Dick, slipping out of bed. "Come, Barney, it seems we are in for a nocturnal adventure of some sort. Get up and get into your clothes."

But Barney was already moving, and was out ere Dick had finished his order.

They were about to pick up their clothes, when they were suddenly told to wait a moment, and one of the fellows took away their weapons.

"You won't have any use for these for awhile," the spokesman remarked, "so you may as well leave them right here."

The weapons removed, they were allowed to dress, and in a few moments were in full attire.

"Now," whispered the leader, "our order is to bind, gag and blindfold you, or kill you if you resist. You are not goin' ter be harmed, and in about an hour you will be back here safe and sound."

"All right; go on with the funeral! There seems no help for it, and I suppose there is no use making a fuss about it."

"If you do make a fuss, it will be the worse for you."

With that a signal was given to one of the men, who proceeded with the business of carrying out the proposed arrangements.

In a little while both Dick and Barney had been securely bound, gagged and blindfolded.

"Now," spoke the leader, "we are about to take you from this room. Walk with all the caution you know how to command. Make any noise, and—"

But he stopped. Something evidently did not suit him.

"No, we will take the safe side," he whispered to his men. "We'll bind their feet, too, and carry them out of the house. Tie their feet, same as you have their hands, and hurry."

That was quickly done, and the prisoners were perfectly helpless.

The door was opened quietly, and after listening for a moment the rascals lifted their prisoners up and bore them from the room.

Almost without a sound they passed down the stairs, then along the hall to a rear door, out, down the steps, and away.

When they had gone a little distance from the house, then the two were allowed the freedom of their feet again. The cords were taken off, and they were told to walk.

With a man on each side of them, they were led away, in what direction they could not tell, and for twenty minutes not a word was spoken.

Finally the stop was made, and a voice broke the silence.

"Ha! you brought them, did you?" was exclaimed.

"You bet we did," was the response.

"Well, free their mouths and eyes, and let them look about them."

The order was quickly executed.

Dick and Barney took a survey of their surroundings.

They were standing in a dismal mountain gorge, narrow and rugged, a mere crack in the mighty rock.

With them stood three men, masked, while before them, at a little distance, stood a fourth, whose face was revealed, and at sight of whom Dandy Dick uttered a cry of rage.

"Craig Morgan! Would that I could get at your throat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" the man laughed. "I see you recognize me, Dick Darrel."

"Yes, I do, curse you! And I see that you know who I am. Release me, and I will fight you to the death."

"Well, hardly, I guess," with mocking tone. "I have no desire to grapple with you at present. But I have brought you here for a purpose."

"What is your purpose? Do you mean to murder me, as you have already murdered others? You may sneer now, Craig Morgan, but unless you take my life while you have me in your power, your doom is certain."

"Bah! I fear you not. What can you do, out here where every advantage is on my side? Didn't I tell you that I would have sweet revenge? And haven't I had it? I can laugh at you now as I have been laughing at you for some time. Ha, ha, ha! You are no match for me, Dandy Dick."

"Oh! Heaven curse you! Would that I could burst these bonds, and I would dash your brains out upon these rocks." And Dick tugged

madly at his bonds, until hands were laid on him. "It is your hour now, curse you!" he panted, "but mine will come. A crime like yours will not be allowed to go unavenged, and I have taken the oath of vengeance against you. I will hound you to the ends of the earth, if need be, for I swear that your life's blood shall be mine!"

CHAPTER XII.

DANDY DICK DERIDED.

THE other laughed in derision.

Barney O'Linn looked at Dandy Dick, too amazed to speak yet.

The more he saw of him, the more he thought that something like "Tiger" Dick would be a more appropriate name for him.

It was a tableau unique, that which these six men went to make, and the scene was lighted by a torch that was sticking in a cleft in the rocky wall of the narrow defile.

And it puzzled Barney to understand why there were not seven of them, all told, since there had been four of their captors, at the outset, while now there appeared but three. What had become of the other man? He could not answer the question.

As for Dick Darrel, he was trembling with passion, and his face was pale and drawn. His nerves were twitching, his muscles were standing out like knots upon his athletic limbs, and his every thought and instinct was centered upon the one idea he had uppermost in mind—revenge!

"That was a pretty speech, truly," Craig Morgan—as Dick had called the man—sneered, "but it will avail you nothing. Talk will not saw wood, Dick Darrel, and when you set yourself up to oppose me, you take more than you can handle. You came into this part of the country as Richard Prince, and no doubt thought that your dudish make-up would serve you as a disguise. But you could not fool me."

"It is your time now," returned Dick, with forced calmness. "Mine will come, unless you murder me while you have me in your power, and then look out. The fury of hell will be tame as compared with mine, when the hour comes."

"Bah! Your talk makes me despise you the more. Would I kill you? Not by any means! It is a part of my revenge that you shall live, knowing that Craig Morgan has kept his oath and despoiled you of every earthly happiness. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, you may grate your teeth; I like to see you do it. This is the hour I have looked forward to for many a day."

"Why have you brought me here?" Dick demanded, forcing down the anger that only made him the laughing-stock of his foe. "What do you intend doing with me?"

"Why have I brought you here?" was the mocking repetition; "why indeed, except to taunt you. When I am done, then you will be taken back to the hotel at Burnt Match, baby that you are!"

"Coward that you are, you dared not come there and face me like a man, and give me the satisfaction that should be mine!"

"You mistake, Dick Darrel. I have been with you at the camp; have been close enough to you to touch you."

"You lie! You could not appear there, no matter what your disguise, and I not know you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When have I seen you there?" Dick hotly demanded.

"No matter, but take my word for it. It delights me to puzzle and baffle you like this."

"But you shall pay for this hour's torture, Craig Morgan. I will scour these hills but I hunt you out of your hole, and when I have found you—"

The sentence was left unfinished, evidently for want of language strong enough for the occasion.

"No, you will do nothing of the kind," the other disputed. "You will not remain three days in this part of the country."

"Won't I! The powers below could not drag me away, Craig Morgan. It must be your life or mine. We cannot breathe the same air, and both live. Why think you I will go away?"

"Because I have had you brought here, secondarily, to warn you that you *must* go. You are given three days, in which to take your leave. If you are not gone at the end of that time, a horrible fate will be yours."

"I thought I was to be allowed to live, as a part of your tigerish revenge."

"And so you are; but do you want to be buried alive in these mountains, to drag out the remainder of your existence in chains?"

"Would you dare to put me to such a fate?"

"Do you doubt that I would? But I speak not for myself in this; I speak for another."

"And who is that other?"

"Devil Duval."

"Begorra!" suddenly broke in Barney O'Linn, "but Oi have it! Ye are wan an' dhe same, so ye are, ye Satan's Imp! Oh, I knows ye now—so I do!"

"My own thought," assented Dick. "Craig Morgan, you are the outlaw upon whose head a price is set. It was you who murdered that innocent—"

"Say no more about it," the knave interrupted, with a wave of the hand. "You have been warned, and if you do not heed the warning, your fate awaits you. You will be chained in a mountain cavern, there to rot."

"Then you don't deny that you are Devil Duval?"

"If it is any satisfaction to you, I am that gentleman. These are some of my men."

"Dhen be hivvins it is a bone Oi have to pick wid ye mesel," cried Barney. "Never a shtep do Oi move out av dhe hills till Oi have found yer den and—"

"Say no more, Barney," interrupted Dick. "Silence is better."

"Oh, I can finish what he would say," the outlaw spoke up. "He means to find our retreat and rescue that black-eyed relation of his who is with us. Better not try it on, my lad."

"How did ye know dhat?" Barney demanded.

"Easily enough. I was in town to-night when Red-nose Mike was killed, and know all about the letter you found upon him. Only that by that fact I know he was as good as a traitor, I would avenge his death upon both of you."

"Begorra, but it is dhe royal liar ye are, an' dhat Oi'm sayin' to yer head, so Oi am. Av Oi had seen dhe face av ye dhere, sure Oi would know ye now, which same Oi'll be hanged av Oi do."

Barney's meaning was plain, even though expressed in cloudy language. Like Dandy Dick, he would not believe that this human devil had been so near them.

"It makes little difference whether you believe it or rot," the outlaw returned. "You have heard what the result will be if you don't get away from here within three days."

"An' do ye m'ane to serve me dhe same way as me master!" demanded Barney.

"No; we'll hang you to the first convenient limb. And if you don't be mighty civil I'll order that done at once."

"Divil a peep more will ye hear out av me," averred Barney, and he shut up like a wakened clam.

Dandy Dick, believing that his enemy had a spy in the camp, was now trying to guess who it could be. Of course his short time there rendered this a difficult thing to do.

And then, too, he was in no frame of mind for calm reflection. With the man before him whose life he sought, and with righteous justice on his side, too, it was not easy to think carefully, though he could think rapidly.

"Well, what do you intend to do, Dick Darrel?" the outlaw demanded.

"You have already heard what I intend to do," was the answer.

"All right; it's your own funeral. A man of mine will watch you, night and day, and will let me know whether you heed my advice or not."

"I can plainly see that you want to get me away from here. But let me tell you, Craig Morgan, and once for all, that Dick Darrel is no man to be baffled. He will hunt for you to your doom!"

"I laugh at such talk from you, Dick Darrel. But, when I threaten, as you have good cause to know, my threats are executed. If you are not away from this country within three days, know what to expect. Men, bind the fellows and take them back."

Dick retorted, hotly, but it brought forth only laughter and derision.

And he was speedily cut short, for the gag was forced into his mouth, and his eyes were blindfolded as they had been at first.

"Take them back!" the voice of the outlaw chief ordered, "and leave them in their room, gagged and bound as they are now. It will be a good warning to the whole town of the power of Devil Duval."

No other word was spoken, and the return march was begun immediately.

Finally the town was reached, and a halt was made while the prisoners' feet were secured. That done, they were taken up and carried into the house, as they had been carried out, the

same number of men being again with them. In the room, there the bandages were removed from their eyes, and they beheld four men as before. All were closely masked, and their identity could not be guessed.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK GETS A SMALL CLEW.

BARNEY O'LINN would undoubtedly have offered some remark, but he was not given opportunity.

And it was the same with Dandy Dick. He had now guessed the truth, that one of these four was his arch enemy, Craig Morgan himself.

Such was the fact. At the place to which Dick and Barney had been taken, the rascal had merely stepped apart from the others, removed his mask, and then addressed the others as a fifth personage.

"Well, here you are again," the outlaw now whispered, "and here we will leave you, with the compliments of our chief."

The voice was so changed, that Dick could hardly believe he had guessed aright, positive as he had been of his discovery. If this was Craig Morgan, his power to alter his voice was remarkable.

"And you had better heed the warning Devil Duval has given you," he added. "He is a man who never breaks his word, in a matter of this kind, and you have heard what your fate is to be if you disregard the warning."

The four now moved toward the door, but the leader stopped and turned back, glancing around the room.

Some paper was lying on a table near at hand, and stepping to the table he drew a heavy pencil from his pocket and printed something on one of the sheets.

When he had done this he laid down the pencil, and, taking up the sheet, spat upon the back of it and clapped it up on the wall opposite the door. The print was large and plain, and these were the words displayed:

"BEWARE THE DECREE

OF

"DEVIL DUVAL."

Stepping back, the rascal pointed to this, looking at Dandy Dick, and in the same voice as before, said:

"Feast your eyes on that till morning. We'll leave the light so that you can see it. As I'm the Devil's lieutenant I am authorized to use his name when I think it suitable. Digest it well, and don't fail to heed the warning."

With that, then, he turned to the door, and the four passed out of the room. A slight click was heard when the door had closed, and the key, in the lock on the inside, was turned.

This explained to the prisoner how entrance had been gained in the first instance, for they had locked the door upon retiring, with nippers, from the outside.

Dandy Dick Darrel was in a fever to get free, now that the rascals had gone, for they had left a clew—one that the leader might think of at any moment, and return to secure.

Both his hands and Barney's were tied behind their backs, their feet were securely bound, and they were still gagged, as we have seen.

Dick's thoughts flew rapidly, seeking the means of accomplishing his object, but for a time did not succeed in grasping the right idea. But, presently, it came like a flash.

Turning himself over, and working up a little higher on the bed, which it did not take long to do, he brought his fingers to play upon the knot that held the gag in Barney's mouth, and it was speedily untied.

"Begorra, but dhat was foinel!" Barney exclaimed when he had shaken the thing out of his mouth. "Oi was thryin' to tink av dhe how to do it, but hang me av Oi had dhe wit, no more Oi had. Hould yer whist, now, an' Oi'll do dhe same fur yersel' in jest wan minute."

He was as good as his word, and Dick, too, soon had the use of his tongue.

"Good for you, Barney!" he complimented. "You have served me well. Now try and free my hands in the same way, and we shall soon have our liberty. The warfare has opened in earnest, it seems."

"Begob, but ye are roight, so ye are. Av dhere ain't blue shmoke in dhe air before another moon, dhen ye may kick me fur a jackass, dhat's all. It shtroikes me we are in fur it, an' dhat dhere is goin' to be some throuble in dhe near beyanst!"

Barney set at work immediately, and after some little time succeeded in getting Dick's bonds loose.

That point gained, all the rest was easy. Dick rolled out of bed, crept over to where his weapons lay, and with his knife cut the cords that held his feet, then doing the same for Barney.

"Free again!" Dick exclaimed. "This is a lesson for us, Barney."

"Roight yez are!" Barney agreed.

"A lesson for us never to lay aside our weapons again, while such foes as ours are at large."

"Yis, begorra; and never fur dhe both av us to go aslape at wanst, aythur. Oi intind to watch while you slape after dhis."

"That may not be necessary, for we can take better precaution about securing our door hereafter. But, Barney, here is a clew the devils left for us."

As he spoke, Dick reached to the table and picked up the pencil which the outlaw had left lying there.

Barney gave vent to an exclamation, and jumped with delight, snapping his fingers.

"Not too loud!" Dick had to caution. "We don't want to be overheard."

"Roight yez are, but Oi was dhat tickled Oi couldn't help it. But, say," his ardor suddenly cooling, "phwat good will it do yez?"

"It may do much good, and again it may not do any," was the response. "That remains to be seen. But if I am not greatly mistaken I have seen this pencil before."

"Dhe devil ye say! Phwere have ye seen it? Begorra, but av ye can foind dhe owner av it ye will lay hands onto dhe man phwat left it here, whoever he may be, an' Oi dunno."

Dandy Dick was now studying the printed letters on the notice the outlaw had posted up.

Barney asked no questions, but he could see that his master had some idea in mind, or was trying to study up a point.

"Well," Dick finally remarked, taking the notice down and destroying it, "I guess the excitement is over for to-night, Barney. We will finish our sleep."

"Never a wink more will Oi be afther takin' dhis noight," Barney declared. "Sure av we go to slape again we may wake up in dhe mornin' to foind oursel's kilted intoirely so we may."

"We will lie down, anyhow. We can secure the door better, and no one can get in without our knowing it."

"But how will ye be doin' av it?"

"We'll move the bed against it."

Accordingly, this was done, and they threw themselves upon the bed, boots and all.

But there was no more sleep for either of them. The excitement through which they had passed, and their active thoughts forbade.

They talked but little, and when coming daylight caused their lamp to pale, they got up. They were rested, even though they had had little sleep, and were ready for the events of the day.

Dandy Dick made his toilet with his usual care, and except for the bullet-hole in his hat, was not much the worse for the exciting scenes through which he had passed. He and Barney now held quite a consultation. But it was impossible to arrange details. They must be guided by events as they came.

Finally, when the household was astir, and the street was beginning to waken into life for another day, they went down.

They had agreed to say nothing whatever about their night's adventure.

Honorable Hamp, the mayor, was in the bar-room when they entered, and greeted them heartily.

Such, at any rate, was his manner toward Dick. He had little or nothing to say to Barney. The young Irishman had evidently hurt his dignity on the previous evening.

"Haven't seen anything of that missing woman yet, have you?" the mayor asked, presently.

"No, not a thing," returned Dick. And he was eying the man keenly.

"I was just asking the landlord here if she had put in an appearance. He has seen nothing of her. Mighty strange, isn't it?"

"It certainly is strange," Dick agreed. "I do not see what can have become of her. She disappeared suddenly, and may have met with foul play, though I can't see how that has been possible."

Their conversation ran on till breakfast-time. Little was said of interest to our story, but all the time Dandy Dick was eying the mayor in a curious way. Something about the man seemed to have awakened a new interest. What was it? It was a question he put to himself, and did not answer.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER WOMAN IN THE CASE.

BREAKFAST done, Dick returned to the bar-room.

He had made a short stay in the dining-room, and left Barney still at the table.

Few persons were in the bar-room, and this was what Dick had figured upon. He had a point to play, the first move of which had to be carefully made.

Approaching the office desk, idly picking his teeth, he stooped suddenly and pretended to pick something up from the floor. The object was a lead pencil, which he had in hand at the time.

It was the one that had been left in his room by the outlaw.

Displaying it, as he rose, to the landlord, he observed:

"Somebody has lost a pencil."

"Not mine, sir," the landlord declared.

"And it certainly isn't mine," added Dick. "Just stick it up there where it will be plainly seen, and its owner may notice it."

This the landlord did, putting the pencil up on the top of a bottle where it was shown in bold outline against a silvered box. No one could help seeing it, looking in that direction.

Not another word was said about it, and Dick passed on to the piazza, where he took a few turns up and down.

After a little while Barney came out and joined him. Dick asked concerning his horse, as others were near by, and Barney went off to the stables.

When he returned he reported that the horse was all right, and had received the best of care, and there being no one at hand then to overhear, Dick was able to say what he had been unable to say before.

"That pencil is on a bottle behind the bar. I have had my eye on it. Now you take charge of it, watch it every moment, and if any one gives any attention to it, do not fail to find out who he is, at the same time not letting him know you are watching."

"Sure, ye may trust me fur dhat," Barney declared confidently. "Oi can do dhat same, and divil a wanst will any wan set his two eyes upon dhat pansil widout me knowin' av it."

With that he sauntered into the bar-room, and picking up a paper, dropped into a chair as though he had come to stay.

A little later and the dude, E. Chauncey Howe, came in from the dining-room, and seeing Barney, asked where Dick was. Barney directed him to the piazza.

The youth passed out, and joining Dick, the two fell into an earnest talk. A new chapter in the series of events was unfolded to Dick during their conversation, and the youth wanted his advice.

Dick gave that, freely. Light was beginning to dawn, though Dandy Dick was still in the dark. There was much that puzzled him; everything that baffled him. Yet, the end was coming now—rather the beginning of the end.

While these two were talking, something else of interest took place in the bar-room.

Barney O'Linn was at his post, seemingly buried in the columns of his paper, but really keenly on the alert, with an eye upon that pencil.

Honorable Hampton Warde came into the room, looking at peace with himself and all the world, and, stepping to the bar, asked for a cigar. Barney was watching him, as he had watched every one else who had approached the bar.

Suddenly, and most unexpectedly, his vigilance was rewarded. He saw the mayor glance at the pencil, and at the same instant give a start, as of surprise, and his hand flew to his vest pocket. Immediately he looked around, but Barney was deeply interested with the news.

And Barney was not the only one who had noted it. The landlord, too, had observed the mayor's action.

"Your pencil, Mayor Hamp?" the landlord asked, taking it down.

"No, it isn't mine," was the answer. "Where did you get it, though?"

He spoke in low tones, and Barney could no more than catch his words, but his ears were keen.

"Why," the landlord explained, "that young sport you call Dandy Dick picked it up here on the floor a little while ago."

"Picked it up on the floor? Are you sure about that?"

"Certainly; saw him do it. It was right down there," pointing out the spot.

"Oh, well, it don't matter," the mayor lightly passed over; "it isn't mine, so I'm not interested."

With another turn of his eyes in Barney's direction, then, the mayor passed out, puffing away at his cigar, easily, coolly.

The Lady Tiger was late in coming down to breakfast.

When she entered the dining-room no one was there, the last one except herself having breakfasted.

But this seemed to be not an unusual thing for her, and the quality of the repast placed before her was none the worse for her tardiness.

She seemed in a bright mood, however, which had not always been the case in the morning, and the young woman who waited upon the table noted that she was dressed with unusual finish for that hour.

When she had finished the meal she did not return to her room, as usual, but entered the parlor.

She had not been long there when the door opened and the Honorable Hampton Warde looked in, and seeing her, entered quickly and hastened toward her.

"My answer," he exclaimed, "what is it to be?"

She smiled upon him favorably, and motioned him to a seat.

"It is not going to be unfavorable," she replied.

"So I thought, the moment I caught sight of your face," he declared.

"But it must be conditional," she added.

"Ha! But, no matter. I accept the conditions, provided they are not too severe."

"Of that you must be the judge. Are you ready to hear them?"

"Yes, yes, let me have them."

"Last night I told you much about myself, particularly concerning my mission of vengeance."

"Yes, yes, I recollect well."

"It is upon that mission of vengeance the condition rests."

"You have but to name it, then, and I'll agree to whatever terms you impose. You have got the drop on me, if you will permit the expression."

The Lady Tiger smiled.

"Very well; you are taken at your word. I will become your wife, Hampton, on condition that you will not only not interfere with my vengeance, but that you will aid me all in your power toward bringing the mission to a close."

It was now the mayor's turn to smile.

And smile he did, a cunning, meaning smile, something like one that had appeared upon his face at his parting with the woman on the previous evening.

But she evidently noticed nothing of that. The mayor had found favor in her sight, and the smile was taken as indicative of the willingness with which he was ready to comply with her demands.

"How can you call so simple a request as that a condition?" the mayor asked. "I agree to it, of course. Why would I not? You may count upon me for that, every time. I will make the cause my own."

"No, I do not ask that; all I require is your support."

"Well, you shall have it."

"I will marry you."

The mayor glanced around, saw that no one else was present, and catching the woman to his breast, kissed her.

"And now," he further demanded, "when will you make my happiness complete?"

"Whenever you will," was the answer.

"Then it shall be the day after to-morrow. The boys will want to make a big time, naturally, so I'll let it be known at once."

"Do just as you think best about that; I will be ready."

"That settles it. You are going to make me the proudest man in the country, Lady Tiger!"

"And I hope I shall be a happy woman," was the honest response. "I love you, as you have the right now to know, and will be a true wife to you."

Their talk was quite a long one, after that, but nothing that needs be quoted here.

Finally they parted for the time being, the woman going to her room, and the mayor going forth to let out the secret so that the news would soon be heralded.

Some time later he had occasion to go to his room in the hotel, a room which he usually kept locked, carrying the key with him. He unlocked the door and entered leaving the key in the lock. Hearing a noise a moment later, he

turned, to find himself covered by a revolver in the hands of a woman who stood just within the room, her back braced against the door.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAYOR CORNERED.

THE Mayor of Burnt Match turned pale for the instant.

He stared as though at one risen from the dead. The woman was the missing Viola Tazewell!

There she stood, in appearance the same as when she had last been seen, except that now no veil covered her face.

"You!" the mayor cried.

"Yes, I," was the response.

"Well, and what do you want with me, my lady?"

"I will tell you what I want, Charles Mason," was the answer. "I want you to keep the promise made to me."

"Ha, ha, ha! And I suppose you mean to force me to do it, eh? Do you think I am afraid of a toy like that you hold in your hand? Put away the weapon, and I will then talk with you."

"I prefer to keep it in hand. You have got to listen to me, whether you want to or not. If you attempt to leave the room I will kill you, I swear it."

The Honorable Hamp frowned impatiently.

He was not used to being talked to thus, evidently.

"Well, say your say, then," he snapped, "and have done with it."

"Do you mean to keep that promise, Charles Mason?"

"I do not."

"And why not?"

"Because it does not suit my fancy."

"You think you have found some one whom you love better?"

"Well, perhaps that is it, I won't deny it. What will you do about it?"

"I will show you what I will do about it, Charles Mason. You are engaged to this gambler woman, Lady Tiger, I hear said."

"Such is the fact, I assure you."

"You shall never marry her, that I swear."

"Oh, yes, I shall, too. It is all arranged for, Miss Spiteful."

"Beware how you taunt me, or I will kill you where you stand. I will not see another take the place that is mine by right."

"And how is it yours by right? Simply because of a little flirtation I had with you? You are crazy, woman, crazy. Go away and forget that you ever saw me."

"Crazy, am I? And you demand to know by what right I claim the place this other woman now holds. I will tell you. You met me, won my heart's affection, asked me to marry you, and I said I would."

"Well, I guess you have got it straight, so far."

"Heavens! I am tempted to kill you! You do not know that I am utterly desperate."

"Never mind that part of it; go on with your tale of wrongs, and let me see what kind of a case you can make out."

Tears appeared in the woman's eyes, but she did not fail to keep the man covered with her weapon.

"This is the kind of case I make out of it," she went on. "I learned to love you. Promised to marry you. Gave you every token of my love that a woman can give. Suddenly you were gone, and I knew not where. But I resolved to find, and hold you to the promise you gave. I am now here to claim it. Will you marry me, Charles Mason, and retain my love? Or will you drive me to desperate deeds?"

"You talk as if you mean business."

"And you will find that I do mean business, too!"

"Where have you been since you arrived here with that young fellow?"

"Rest assured that I have been where I have been able to watch you. And I shall continue to watch you, too."

"Well now see here, Pearl Mayne, you are making a fool of yourself in the very worst kind of way. I don't care for you as I thought I did, and of course can't marry you."

"Then you shall never wed that other, I have sworn it!"

"You had better be sparing of your threats. Lady Tiger has claws, and if she finds she has a rival she will let you feel them."

"I fear her not. I hold her life in my hands, and yours, too. Beware of me! You do not know what a fury I can be, if I am driven to it. For the last time, Charles Mason, will you keep good your promise?"

"No, Pearl Mayne, I will not. That was an

idle promise, foolishly made, and it is not binding upon me. You had your share of the pleasure of our flirtation; let that suffice you."

The woman's pistol came higher, her finger pressed nervously upon the trigger, and the wonder was that she did not shoot.

The man faced her, calmly. He felt safe. He knew her passionate love for him, and trusted to that alone in the moment of peril.

It was but a moment, and the tightening finger relaxed.

"I spare you now," the woman spoke. "You may think the better of it when I am gone. Remember, Charles Mason, that Pearl Mayne loves you, would willingly lay down her life for you; but she will not see you married to another. Beware!"

"That was prettily spoken, Pearl, and I admire you, I swear I do; but, what am I going to do about it? Here I am pledged to marry this Lady Tiger, and the announcement has been made."

There was just the shade of a surrender in the man's tone.

"Be true to me," was the firm answer, "and do me justice. I love you, and am willing to be a slave to you; but you can drive me to hate you. Again, beware! Now I go, and upon your action will depend everything. After the day set for your wedding with that other woman, I will appear again, if you have been true to me. Attempt to be false, and your life will pay for it."

"I'll think about it, Pearl. Put away your weapon, now, and let me escort you down."

"No, I go alone, and will take care that you do not follow me immediately. I intend paying a visit to this Lady Tiger, too, and give her the same warning I have given you."

"Don't do that!"

"Why not?"

"She's a devil, if you rouse her. She might kill you on the spot. We must deal otherwise with her, if you expect me to keep my promise to you."

These words brought a gleam of hope into the young woman's eyes.

"Then you will keep your promise to me?" she cried.

"I will see what can be done. Go, now, before you are discovered, but do not give this matter away to Lady Tiger."

"Then you will tell her yourself?"

"I may; or we will elope and leave her to wonder."

"Yes, yes. She has no claim upon you, while I have every claim. Let her suffer, though I imagine her grief will not kill her."

"Well, put up that weapon, then, Pearl, and let us be friends. I admire you more and more, every moment you stand there before me."

"No, I will not yield a single point to you. You played me false once; you might do it again. Now I go. Keep your promise to me, and you will save me from desperate deeds."

Her hand reached behind her and turned the knob, and she opened the door and backed out of the room, closing it after her.

With a bound the mayor sprang across the floor to fling it open and watch to learn where she went to, but she had turned the key in the lock.

In another moment she was out of sight in the hall, and the mayor was left to take the matter as he would. He had been neatly tricked this once in his life, if never before.

"Curse the jade!" he cried. "What has brought her here at this time? She is going to spoil everything for me, if I don't succeed in finding her and doing away with her. Where can she keep herself?"

He tugged at the door furiously, but it would not open, and he began to pound upon it and shout for help.

"She shall pay for this trick!" he cried. "She shall repent that she ever came here. She don't know the man she has to deal with, I guess, but she will know soon."

Again he pounded furiously, shouting his loudest, and soon running steps were heard in the hall.

"Here, curse it! come this way!" he cried. "Unlock this door!"

The key was soon turned, and the mayor was let out, when he bounded into the hall, and demanded to know who had played such a trick upon him—who had dared to play such a trick upon him!

CHAPTER XVI.

A SHOCKING CRIME.

IN the mean time Barney O'Linn had reported. He told Dandy Dick about what he had observed regarding the pencil.

Dick took the information quietly, and when Barney had done, offered the remark:

"I am not greatly surprised, Barney. You know I told you I thought I had seen that pencil before."

"But how and phwere had ye seen it before?" Barney demanded. "Oi would loike to be at dhe bottom av dhe facts wid ye, begorra I would, Misther Dick!"

"As I am perfectly willing you should be, too. It is the same pencil with which the mayor altered the figure upon this notice of reward, if I am not greatly mistaken."

"An' mistaken ye may be, don't ye t'ink?"

Dandy Dick was thoughtful.

"You are right," he agreed. "There may be many pencils of this kind around here. I am half-inclined to believe I am mistaken."

"And so am Oi, begob."

"Upon what grounds do you argue, Barney?"

"Well, Oi'll be tellin' ye. Ye see, supposin' dhe mayor had a pencil loike dhis wan, an' ye say he had. Supposin' he came along, saw dhis wan on dhe bottle, an' felt to see av he had lost his."

"Natural enough, Barney, I admit."

"Av coorse it would be. Dhen he found he had his all roight, and av coorse dhat would settle dhe point. And dhe mayor said dhis wasn't his, ye see."

"You are right, Barney. But the point must not be lost sight of that he recognized the pencil. Keep up the watch upon it!"

It was some time later, some time after the mayor had got out of his room, when a woman's screams caused the citizens of Burnt Match to rush out into the street.

Coming down into the town, from the west, was a woman on horseback, riding without a saddle, her hair flying loosely in the wind, and scream after scream coming from her lips as she advanced.

Behind her thundered another horse, upon which was a man wearing a black mask over his face.

"Save me! save me!" was the woman's cry.

Her arms were outstretched toward the crowd on the street, appealing to them for protection.

On came the horseman, using his spurs wickedly, but he evidently soon realized that the pursuit was useless.

The woman could reach the center of the town before he could overtake her, and whatever his design was it would be balked.

Suddenly drawing rein, he whipped a revolver from his belt and fired. Down went the woman's horse, but she, springing clear, by good luck, ran on.

Another shot, with no effect. Then yet another, and throwing up her arms the woman staggered forward a few paces and fell upon her face in the dust of the road, the masked man at the same time giving a wild laugh.

"Devil Duval!" was the immediate cry.

With another wild laugh, the horseman wheeled and dashed away in the direction from which he had come.

For one moment no action was taken, but the next the crowd made a rush for the spot where the woman lay. The witnesses were almost chilled with horror at what they had seen.

Mayor Warde, leading the way, was soon at the side of the poor victim of the cruel murder, and turning the woman to catch a view of her face, an exclamation escaped him, an exclamation which those who heard took to be one of recognition.

Dandy Dick was not far behind.

"Do you know the woman, mayor?" he asked.

"No, poor soul, I do not," was the response.

"Is she dead?"

"No; but I think she is done for."

"And was it Devil Duval who killed her?"

"I don't see who else it could be. It must have been."

"Well, let's see what can be done for her. If she can be revived so as to be able to talk, she may tell us something."

At that instant a cry was heard, a man's cry, and Barney O'Linn, just having come up, forced his way to the center of the growing crowd and threw himself upon the ground at the woman's side.

"My sister! my poor sister!" he cried.

"Your sister!" exclaimed Dandy Dick. "Is this she?"

"Yes! yes!" Barney wailed, "it's me poor sister Nora, dhat Oi have been lookin' fur so long."

"Heavens! but it is horrible!" Dick muttered. "Come, we will carry her to the hotel, and see what can be done toward saving her life."

"It's no use," declared the mayor. "She

hasn't two minutes to live. Better let her lie in peace where she is. Poor soul, don't disturb, don't move her; it is of no use."

"Use or no use, to dhe hotel she is goin'," declared Barney, rising.

"I forbid it," cried the mayor. "I will not allow it. It would be cruel to take her up to carry her."

"Sure it would be dhe more cruel to l'ave her here on dhe ground to be dyin' loike a dog," retorted Barney. "Will ye help me wid her, Mister Darrel?"

"It shall not be done!" the mayor now flatly declared, stepping forward. "I am mayor of this camp, and I forbid any man to lay hands upon this body. Men, see that my orders are obeyed."

He had stepped one leg over the body, and stood with his foot planted there, defying them all.

"You are going a step too far, mayor," reminded Dandy Dick.

"What business is it of yours?" was the demand. "I am going to be obeyed in my own town, I guess."

"Not in this instance you won't," Dick quietly disclaimed. "Remove your foot from this body, so the lad can pick his sister up!"

"Who are you, Mister Jackanapes, anyhow, that you dare talk like this to me? I want you to understand that I am mayor of—"

"Out av me way!" cried Barney, presenting a revolver at his head, "or by dhe powers Oi'll drill ye!"

Several others reached for weapons, to side with the mayor, but they were too late. With a quick move Dandy Dick had picked the mayor up and pitched him over the heads of the crowd, with a show of strength that seemed superhuman, almost. And, in the same instant, a pair of revolvers gleamed in his fists.

"Back!" he cried. "Any man who draws a weapon will get something he will not relish. Take up your sister, Barney, and carry her to our room. I will protect you in it, mayor or no mayor."

At that moment the wounded woman opened her eyes.

"Save me!" she gasped. "Save me from—"

"Nora! Nora, darlint!" cried Barney. "Don't ye know me?"

Her eyes sought his face, guided by his voice, and the next moment, with a glad smile upon her face, she swooned.

The young Irishman took her tenderly up and bore her away, Dandy Dick standing with his revolvers bearing upon the crowd, holding them in check.

By this time the mayor had gathered himself up, and was howling. He called upon his followers to put Dick under arrest at once, but he called in vain. They had seen a sample of him.

"Your own fault, mayor, that you got roughly handled," Dick coolly reminded. "You were going too far this time, and somebody had to take you down."

"It was a bad thing for you to do," the mayor growled. "You may live to repent of it, if you live long."

"Maybe, but I doubt it."

The two glared at each other fiercely, and as Dick looked into those eyes he recognized something that had baffled him before.

In spite of his effort, his face paled a little, and his hand twitched upon the revolvers nervously.

The mayor evidently saw something, too, for he quickly turned his back to the weapons and walked away without further talk.

Dandy Dick still held cover over the crowd, nor did he let the men move from there until Barney had reached the piazza.

"Now," he then said, "you may go. I haven't the least ill-will against one of you, but circumstances forced me to show my teeth. Hope it won't happen again."

"It won't happen no more, fur ez I am consarned," one fellow cried out. "I don't want ter hook no horns with you, Mister Dandy!"

And that seemed to be the sentiment of the crowd, the mayor having gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK AND BARNEY DRAW OUT.

DICK moved away as soon as he could, yet kept his eyes well about him.

Going straight to the hotel, he hastened to the room occupied by himself and Barney, where he expected to find the Irish lad now.

Barney was there. A doctor, who had been sent for, had just arrived—a fellow who claimed to be a doctor. The wound of the woman was being examined.

"It will prove fatal before two hours pass," the doctor announced.

Barney uttered a groan, and his tears fell hot and fast upon the form of her he loved with true Irish fervor.

"A curse rest upon the wretch that did the deed!" muttered Dandy Dick. "His blood shall yet answer for the crime, Barney."

"By dhe heavens above, it shall!" Barney echoed. "By all dhat is good I swear dhat Oi will know no peace or rest till Oi have had me revenge fur dhis crime. Can't ye do not'in' fur her, docthor?"

"Not a thing, my poor fellow. She is beyond all help."

"An' won't she be comin' to no more, to shpake wid me?"

"Yes, she will probably revive before she dies."

"T'ank Heaven fur dhat! She can tell us dhe name av dhe fiend dhat kilted her, bad luck to him!"

Just then the woman opened her eyes again, uttering a moan as she did so.

Barney had her hand in his, in an instant, and was calling her name, fondly, sorrowfully.

She turned her gaze upon him, and the light of recognition was seen in her eyes. For a few seconds only their hands' pressure spoke.

"Barney!" the sister presently exclaimed.

"Yis, Nora, dear; mesel' it is!" was the response.

Dandy Dick and the doctor were about to withdraw from the room, but Barney asked Dick to remain.

"Sure ye will want to be witness to phwat-ever me poor sister has to say, so ye will, he reminded. "Ye may hear much dhat will interest ye."

This Dick knew, and turned back, motioning the doctor to do the same.

Only a moment later there came a furious rap at the door, and Dick, weapon in hand, stepped to open it.

It was opened promptly, but no one was in sight—no one was to be seen in the hall!

Dick looked up and down, but could see no one, and turned a questioning gaze upon his companions. What was the meaning of this?

"Dhe door!" Barney suddenly exclaimed, pointing. "Look on the door!"

Dick looked quickly, and there on the door was a notice, in penciled letters, large and bold.

"BEWARE DEVIL DUVAL!"

"FIVE HOURS!"

"Get Out!"

Dick snatched the paper down and closed the door.

A moment later loud shouting was heard below in the street.

Looking out, those in the room saw a masked and cloaked horseman dashing out of the camp with the speed of the wind.

"Devil Duval!" was the shout. "Devil Duval!"

With a cry, Barney sprung back and seized his gun.

"Be hivvins! but it's mincemeat Oi'll be makin' av him!" he exclaimed. "Let me get a crack at him wid me musket."

Darrel was already trying to raise the window but it refused to open, and a hasty examination showed that it had been nailed down. In another moment the horseman was out of range.

A volley of shots was heard below, then, but it was too late; the rascal was away in safety.

In the middle of the street, weapons in hand and gazing after him, was the mayor.

Dandy Dick looked in astonishment. This certainly did not tend to support the suspicions, he had so recently entertained.

"What means this warning notice that was left for you?" asked the doctor.

He was a young man, who had not been long at the place, and was known as the Tenderfoot Doctor, but whose real name was Howards, John Howards.

"It means that I and my man here are told to make ourselves scarce," Dandy Dick responded. "Advice we hardly think of following, however. But, this woman; let us hear her story."

Barney was again bending over his sister, fondly and anxiously, listening to her story, which she had already begun.

The others drew near and listened, bearing a tale of wrongs and suffering that brought tears to their eyes. And more than that, hearing a revelation that filled them with horror and fired them all for vengeance.

About an hour later Nora died, and Dick gave

his hand to Barney over her body. There was a pressure of hands that was full of fearful import.

Late in the afternoon was a funeral. The body of the poor Irish girl was laid to rest, with all the tenderness a fond brother's love could show.

That sad duty done, Dick and Barney went back to the hotel, and to their room, to lay their plans of action. The matter was now in their hands, fully. How was the affair going to terminate?

In their room, which they had left locked, was another notice from the outlaw, purporting to be signed by his lieutenant, warning them that their time of grace was growing short—that, if they wanted to escape the fate which had been threatened they must leave the camp at once.

Dandy Dick smiled scornfully.

"I would not go," he vowed determinedly, "even were it certain death to remain here, so long as there is a hope of vengeance against this fiend!"

"Nur me aythur, begob!" echoed Barney. "It's war to dhe knife, now, and Oi have a sister's death to avenge. Wanst let me lay me two hands onto dhe villain dhat killed her, an'—"

Words failed him.

Suddenly a new thought struck Dandy Dick.

"Barney," he spoke, "I have changed my mind. We will heed this warning and go away from here immediately."

"Never!" the young Irishman cried. "Sure ye can't be meanin' dhat! It is no coward ye are, dhat Oi have found out; but phwat dhe devil has hit ye?"

Dick smiled.

"You see I have changed my mind suddenly," he added in a low tone. "A new idea has come to me, and I believe it is the very one for us to act upon. Yes, we will go away as soon as possible."

They sat down, and Dick unfolded his plan, which, when the Irishman had heard he agreed to quickly.

"Begorra, we'll go," he cried. "Sure it is frightened half-out av me seven senses Oi am, an' Oi wouldn't sbay here another hour fur dhe wurreld, no more Oi would, sor."

And, as he uttered the words Barney picked up his gun, put on his hat, gathered up his other personal effects and made for the door.

Dick laughed. The more he saw of the real character of his man, the better he liked him.

"I am with you," he declared. "Hold on long enough for me to get what belongs to me."

This it did not take him long to do, and in a few moments they went down to the bar-room.

There Dick showed the landlord the notice he had found in the room.

"No use kicking against business like that," Dick observed, carelessly; "I'm going. I've seen enough of the work of this outlaw of yours to satisfy me, and I don't want to sample him any further. What's our bill?"

The landlord exhibited genuine surprise over the matter, and knew not what to say.

He could not offer anything in excuse or explanation; nor could he claim that his house was a harbor of safety, since the outlaw seemed to come and go as he pleased.

Darrel settled the score, while Barney went for the horses—or horse and mule. And, a little later, they rode out of the town, while the news was passed from lip to lip that they had shown the white feather, having been frightened off by the note of warning of Devil Duval.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPRINGING A SURPRISE.

BURNT MATCH was all excitement. It was the day set for the wedding of the mayor, Honorable Hampton Warde, to the Lady Tiger.

A big time was being planned, and arrangements were in progress for the jubilee such as the town had never had before and might never see again.

The wedding was to take place early in the evening, in the parlor of the Mansion House, and immediately after the ceremony, a big supper was to be disposed of—a free lunch and open bar in the Tin Horn at the same time.

There was no minister or priest at Burnt Match, but there was a parson at a town twenty miles away, and he had been sent for.

As the evening drew on apace, however, and he did not appear, the mayor began to show anxiety.

But, finally, just at dusk, a stranger in clerical garb rode up to the door of the Mansion House,

dismounted, entered and inquired for the mayor.

The mayor was right on hand, and welcomed him at sight. There was no mistaking the man's profession; he looked "preacher" all over. But he was certainly not the one who had been expected.

The man was armed with a letter, however, from the minister who had been sent for, introducing him and recommending him to the mayor's favor, as a new-comer from the East. Circumstances, the parson explained, prevented his coming himself, so he did the next best thing.

The stranger, whose name was given as Theophilus Jones, was heartily welcomed, and was presently introduced to the prospective bride.

Time quickly passed, and the hour for the ceremony was at hand. The parlor was filled with invited guests, those citizens of the town who held first rank.

Rev. Theophilus Jones was in his place, and, at the proper moment, the mayor entered with his bride-elect upon his arm.

They took their places, and the service was commenced.

When that part of the ritual was reached in which it was demanded of the pair if they knew of any reason why they might not be lawfully wed, both answered promptly, No.

Instantly the preacher's book fell from his hands, and a pair of deadly revolvers were in its place, covering the mayor's heart!

"If you know of no obstacle, I do!" the parson cried, in changed voice. "You are under arrest, Craig Morgan, charged with the crime of murder!"

"Craig Morgan!" screamed Lady Tiger, and she sprung from his side in greatest horror.

"Dhat's phwat's the matther wid Hanner!" put in a strong Irish voice; and Barney O'Linn sprung forward, grabbing the mayor's arms from behind.

"It is a lie!" the mayor cried, struggling to free himself. "It is a lie! I defy you to prove it!"

"Stop your struggling," ordered the parson, quietly, "or I will drop you with a bullet with as little compunction as I would kill a wolf, for wolf you are!"

"And after dhe which," supplemented Barney, "Oi will make sassage av ye wid me own hand—ye villain av the earth!"

"Who are you?" the mayor demanded, speaking to the parson.

"Who am I? Look and see!"

With one hand the assumed parson tore off his wig, whiskers and spectacles, and stood revealed—Dandy Dick Darrel!

"Dick Darrel!" the rascal exclaimed.

Lady Tiger, who had been standing as if chilled with horror at the situation, and at the name she had heard—Craig Morgan—now gave another scream, repeating the name spoken—Dick Darrel.

Dandy Dick glanced at her, questioningly.

She was pressing her hands to her head, her eyes were dilated, and she was fairly dazed.

"You know me?" Dick asked.

"My God!" the woman cried, "is it possible?"

Dandy Dick stared at her in utter bewilderment. *Who was she?*

"Oi t'ink, begob, dhat Oi will make sure av dhis gossoon before he takes it into his head to thry to get away," here broke in Barney. "Lend a hand, some wan!"

"Never!" the rascal cried, and he began a struggle immediately.

But one of Dick Darrel's steel-nerved hands was laid upon him, the other pressing a revolver against his head, caused him to desist.

"Citizens of Burnt Match," Dick spoke, then, "I call upon you to make this man a prisoner until you have heard my charge against him. In him you see the notorious outlaw, Devil Duval! Your mayor and the outlaw fiend are one and the same person, as I will prove."

Exclamations of amazement were heard on all sides, and men were present who were willing to obey Dick's directions.

The mayor was soon bound, in spite of his struggles and imprecations.

About this time a loud scuffling was heard in the hall and on the piazza, intermingled with oaths and angry exclamations.

This lasted only a short time, however, when comparative quiet was again restored. Soon after a rear door opened and four bound men were dragged into the room, in custody of half a dozen others well armed.

"Behold the Devil's Half-Dozen," announced Dandy Dick, with a wave of the hand toward them. "They were coming to the rescue of

their chief, but I had planned for *that* move, also, and this is the result. No doubt they are known to you, every one of them."

There were exclamations of surprise. The men were well known, and it could hardly be believed that they were indeed the dreaded outlaws. This doubt was expressed by some.

"There is no mistake about it," assured Dick. "That poor Irish girl who was shot the other day while trying to escape from them, gave us their names, every one. She was shot to prevent her revelations."

This statement caused the rascals to pale, and their looks went to prove the case against them.

Just then a groan was heard, near at hand, and some one sunk down senseless to the floor. A look showed it to be the dude, E. Chauncey Howe.

"Please take that woman up and carry her from the room," Dick asked.

"Woman!" was the exclamation.

"Yes; it is the missing Viola Tazewell," Dick explained.

"Curse her!" ejaculated the surprised mayor. The "dude" was lifted up and taken away, and Dandy Dick turned to the crowd to tell his story.

"Citizens of Burnt Match," he addressed the people, "you have a right to an explanation which I am only too willing to make. I will tell you my story, and when I have done, if you find that justice and right are on my side, all I ask is the privilege of meeting this human devil face to face in a fair fight. Will you grant me this favor?"

"We will, we will," cried some; while others demanded the story.

The Lady Tiger had dropped upon a chair, and, her face buried in her hands, was weeping.

"My name," Dandy Dick went on, "is Richard Prince Darrel. I am from the East, as is also this knave, whose true name is Craig Morgan. Six years ago I had a rival for the hand of one of the fairest girls who ever lived, one Rose Merrick."

At mention of this name the Lady Tiger sobbed aloud.

"My rival," the narrator continued, "was this man—No; he is not worthy the name! My rival was this *wolf*, Craig Morgan. He had no hope of winning, for Rose Merrick despised him; but he persisted, and when finally I made the fair girl my wife, he vowed that he would ruin our happiness. He went away, and for a time nothing was seen or heard of him."

"My wife bore me a child, a bright-eyed boy, who—"

A great sob broke from Dick's breast, and for some moments he could not proceed.

"My boy was named after myself," he presently continued. "With my wife and child my happiness was complete, and Craig Morgan's threat was forgotten. About a year after the birth of the child my wife suddenly disappeared. Where she had gone, what had become of her, I could not guess. I was nearly crazed. I searched night and day for weeks and months, but no trace of her was to be found."

"One day, about a year after her disappearance, she returned as suddenly as she had gone, but she was only a shadow of what she had been. She was broken down, was ill, was dying. She told me her sad story, and pledged me to avenge her wrongs and her death. She had been carried off by Craig Morgan, and had been in his power all that time, suffering everything. Curse him! Have I not the right to demand satisfaction? Have I not the right to claim vengeance? The hour is at hand, Craig Morgan. But, citizens, there is more to be told."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LADY TIGER'S STORY.

LADY TIGER was weeping as only a woman can, under a heavy sorrow.

Craig Morgan stood unmoved, a satanic smile curling his sinister lips, and his eyes burning with wicked fire.

As Dandy Dick paused for a moment, there was a howl for the life of this outlaw, this devil in human shape. He would have been lynched in short order, but for his enemy.

"No, no! His life is *mine*!" Dick cried, waving the crowd back. "Hear me to the end, and then let me meet him face to face, with cold steel to settle the score between us. I will fight him to the death. It must be his life or mine."

This checked the impulse, and Dick was urged to tell the rest of his story.

"My wife died," he proceeded, "and over her dead body I swore that my life's work should be to hunt down this human fiend, and avenge her wrongs and sufferings. I had a sister, in whose keeping I left my baby boy, when I set out upon

my hunt, following such directions as my dying wife had been able to give me. But, I had only fairly begun the task when word from my sister called me home. My boy had been stolen!

"I returned home in all haste, and heard my sister's story. The child had been stolen from the house, and by Craig Morgan, as she believed, though she had not seen him around. I was beside myself. In my great anguish I cursed my sister, laying all the blame upon her. Ay, more! I even accused her of playing me false, for Craig Morgan had been her lover, previous to his meeting with Rose Merrick. My words cut her to the heart, as now I know. She disappeared, and I was mean enough to think she had gone to join my enemy. Poor Anita! How I wronged her!"

"I began my search anew, with the firm resolve never to give up until either victory was mine or I was cut down by death. The trail was a long one, but finally it had come to the end. On my way to this camp, the other day, I came suddenly upon a horrible discovery in a canyon some miles to the north. There lay the bodies of a woman and a child, *murdered*! I dismounted and looked at the faces of the dead, when, oh! my God! I found them to be my sister and my missing boy! Five bullet-holes were in my sister's back, two of the balls having passed clear through her body and struck death to my child whom she evidently had clasped to her breast."

With a sudden scream the Lady Tiger sprung up, a knife flashed in her hand, and the next instant it descended, aimed straight for the heart of Craig Morgan.

"Woman!" cried Dick. "Would you rob me of the only thing I have to live for? Would you rob me of my righteous revenge?"

"Revenge is *mine*!" she cried. "Let me free! Let me drive this blade to the monster's heart!"

"Never!" Dick exclaimed, taking the knife from her, and her other weapons as well. "I know you not, Lady Tiger, but you shall not balk me when revenge is so near."

Excitement such as this was something that wild camp had never known.

Dandy Dick had now to stand with weapons in hand, covering the crowd, in order to keep the citizens from cutting the detestable wretch in pieces.

"Again, citizens," he cried, "have I not first claim upon the life of this veritable devil? Ought not his life's blood to belong to me? Don't cheat me of the sweet revenge I have looked forward to for so long—so long!"

"Your story, your story!" was the cry. "Go on, and let's hear the rest of it! You shall have the satisfaction you demand!"

"There is but little more to tell," Dick concluded. "It was there in the canyon I fell in with my man, Barney O'Linn. Together we laid the murdered ones to rest, and over their grave I renewed my vow. We came on to this camp, and what followed our arrival is known to you. The letter Barney found upon the body of Red-nose Mike, gave him a clue to the finding of a missing sister, for whom he was searching, and we were planning her rescue when she rode into camp, pursued by one of the villainous gang whose prisoner and slave she was."

"From Nora, in her dying hour, we learned all we needed to know. It was she who had aided my sister in recovering the child, my boy, when Anita had penetrated to the outlaws' rendezvous. Through her I learned that Anita was indeed innocent, and had devoted her life to the task of recovering the child. She was able to give us the name of every one of the Half-Dozen, and you can see the use to which we have put the information. That, and the notice of this wedding, which I have balked, gave me the right upon which to act."

"Inquiring carefully, I learned where lived the nearest minister, and went to him, as soon as I was sure he was the one to be called upon to come here to perform the ceremony. To him I told my story, and he aided me in assuming the role you have seen me play. Not only that, but we brought help with us, well knowing that Devil Duval's men would not be far away. And I was not mistaken, as their arrest has clearly proved. What more can I say? The rest is all known to you, or can be readily understood or guessed. And now for my revenge! It must be a fight to the death between me and this heinous villain who has ruined my whole life's happiness, and whose very soul is reeking with the blood of his innocent victims."

There was instantly a wild howl of approval, and again was a rush made for the now pale but still defiant mayor.

But, Lady Tiger was upon her feet, now, mo-

tioning the crowd to silence. A revelation from her was necessary to a clear understanding of the total depravity of the outlaw chief.

"You must hear my story," she cried, as soon as she could make herself heard at all. "I, too, have a claim upon the life of this subtle, this infernal, this well-named Devil."

Eager curiosity soon caused silence to fall, and turning to her, Dandy Dick inquired:

"Who and what are you, Lady Tiger?"

"I am she who was Mary Merrick," was the answer; "your dead wife's sister, Dick Darrel!"

"Impossible!"

"No, not impossible, but the fact. Hear my story, and then say whether or not I should share in your revenge upon this—this loathsome thing!"

That story was called for with loud acclaim.

"My maiden name was Mary Merrick, as I have said," the woman responded. "I was several years older than my sister Rose, and married and went away from home before this gentleman, Mr. Darrel, was known to our family. I never saw him until we met at this place. I married and came West, and my marriage was not what I had imagined it would be. My husband turned out to be a gambler, and shame deterred me from ever returning home, or letting my whereabouts be known. My husband was Joe Warne, the notorious gambler of the Pacific Coast. When he died I was left helpless, and naturally took up the business you find me engaged in, having learned it thoroughly, at my husband's command.

"I had heard of my sister's marriage to Dick Darrel, and of her sad end and all the particulars about it. I pledged myself that I would avenge my dead sister's wrongs, and going from place to place, as I was, I hoped sooner or later to fall in with Craig Morgan, whom I had known years before, and thought I would be able to recognize him again at sight. How terribly mistaken I was! When I came here I was thrown into contact with him, knowing him as Hampton Warde, and under the influence of his attentions to me, learned to love him. Heavens! I shiver with horror at the thought now! I promised to marry him, but on condition that he would help me to carry out my purpose of revenge. I told him my story; told him the name of the wretch I was seeking; and he agreed to help me in the task. Where is the end of his diabolical villainy. Knowing me to be the sister of the woman he had wronged—murdered! he would have made me his wife!"

Covering her face with her hands, she sunk down upon her chair, again bursting into tears.

"I grant that you have a just cause against the brute, Mary—Lady Tiger," spoke Dick, "but you will have to admit that my right comes first. Do not regret it, for I assure you the utmost satisfaction in the manner of my dealing with him. A little longer and the score will have been settled.

"Yes, citizens, such a man is your mayor—a knave of deepest dye; a very devil. He is a disgrace to his kind. Defeated by me in winning Rose Merrick, as I have already told you, he stole her from me, treated her shamefully, and when she was dying, almost, allowed her to escape and return to me, he sending his compliments to me through her! Ah, but my revenge will be sweet, when I take it. It was by his order that my sister was shot down, when she was trying to escape with my boy, as that poor Irish girl told me; it was the bullets of his minions that took the two lives at once, that of my poor sister and the boy I loved as I love my life. Craig Morgan, the hour is come!"

"Hould yer whist jest wan minute," put in Barney O'Linn, bobbing up into view in the background. "Sure it is mesel' dhat has a wurred to chip in roight here, so Oi have. D'ye see dhis murderin' villain, here?" indicating one of the other prisoners. "He is dhe wan dhat brought ruin an' death to me poor sister Nora, he is, an' by dhe powers he has got to answer to me fur it all. His name is Owen Maron, but divil only knows how many more names he has had in his loife. In dhe band dhe called him dhe Devil's Roight Bower, an' begorra he was worthy dhe name. An' now av me masher claims dhe loife av dhe Divil fur himself, begorra it is Barney O'Linn dhat claims dhe same av dhe Roight Bower. It shall be a foight to dhe death, an' dhe best man av us to live; both av us can't live, fur dhe wurred won't hold us, no more it will!"

CHAPTER XX.

NEARING THE ENDING.

SHOUTING greeted Barney's closing words. The cry for the ending act was heard on

every side; but Dandy Dick had more to say before the closing scene.

He wanted to present the proof for everything that had been offered, and the doctor was called as a witness to the story Nora O'Linn had told upon her deathbed.

That story was given at length, and it was a chapter of horrors from beginning to end. Nora's personal wrongs was the old, old story, old yet ever new; foolishly confiding woman and heartless knave!

And it was a story not to be doubted with the other proof to support it. It was a revelation into the true characters of the prisoners such as had never been imagined possible. Owen Maron had been Craig Morgan's tool for a long time, and they had worked together in their mutual villainy.

Maron had lent his aid to Morgan in carrying off Dick Darrel's wife, and in return Morgan had given his vassal assistance in his evil designs against the confiding Irish girl. Taking others in with them, they had formed themselves into an outlaw band, the Devil's Half-Dozen, and it is needless to add that a more villainous set of rogues was never cliqued.

Crimes were brought home to every one of the prisoners, supported by proof that it was impossible to gainsay, crimes for which the just penalty was death; and the impatient crowd murmured for their hanging.

To set forth the expose at length is needless. The reader has been made acquainted with the leading facts, and his imagination can supply the rest.

While this was going on, and while the crowd was thus being held in excited suspense, something else was in progress that was destined to have important bearing on the finale.

When the "dude" was carried from the scene, after falling in his faint, "he" was taken to his room and thrown on the bed, and the people little suspecting the person was none other than the missing woman, Viola Tazewell, whose disappearance had been the occasion of considerable curiosity and remark.

She was left alone immediately, to come-to as best she might, those who had brought her there hastening back to the room below.

When the woman revived, as she soon did, she opened her eyes, and the next instant sat up, with a wild, excited expression.

"Where am I? What has happened?" she questioned, half aloud.

She looked around bewildered for a moment, but presently it all came back to her, and she sprang to the floor.

"He is in danger!" she cried, pressing her hands to her head. "They will hang him, unless I can save him! Oh! what shall I do—what can I do?"

She wrung her hands in despair, and walked excitedly up and down the room, trying to think of some means of saving the life of the villain whom she loved, loved madly—insanely.

Presently she snatched a weapon from a pocket and sprang toward the door.

"I will kill them!" she hissed. "I will kill them both! If the man I love must die, they shall die first, and—"

But, with her hand on the door, she stopped.

"No, no! It will not do," she reflected. "That will not save him, but will cost my own life. I must rescue him, I must save him, somehow. Besides, I owe some gratitude to this man, Darrel."

Again she paced the floor, the weapon still in hand, and the hum of voices below ringing in her ears.

"I must save him, I must save him!" she repeated. "I will save him!—though it be at the cost of my life! He shall know how I love him!"

Suddenly a thought seemed to strike her, for she at once became calm and put away the weapon.

Closing and locking the door, she proceeded to lay off her disguise, assuming her proper garb instead.

This done, she left the room, passed along the hall to the rear, descended a back staircase and was soon out of the house.

Without a moment's hesitation she hurried off in the direction of the stables behind the hotel. No one was there to hinder her, and she entered, in the dark, and saddled two horses.

She had been around the stables in daylight, and knew about where to seek for the best animals, and those she took were the best the stables boasted. She led them out and away, finally stopping with them in the shadow of a shed immediately in the rear of the hotel kitchen.

There for the time being she left them, well knowing that they would not be discovered when

every man's attention was drawn to the exciting events of the hour.

Entering the rear hall, she passed through to a point where she could overhear what was going on in the main room.

There the time for action was about at hand.

Dick Darrel had finished his work of proving everything he had charged, and the crowd was growing more and more impatient for the finish.

"Now, gentlemen," spoke Dick, "the time for my revenge has come. I hold you to your promise that I am to deal with this inhuman fiend in my own way. Do you still assent to this?"

"Yas, yas!" was the shout.

"An' begob it is mesel' dhat houlds ye to dhat same, too," put in Barney O'Linn. "Jack must be as good as his masher fur dhis wanst, and Oi claim dhe roight to meet me own enemy dhe same as Mистер Darrel meets his. Phwat do ye say to dhat, me friends?"

"Yas, yas!" was shouted again.

"An' these hyar other cusses we'll hang right off soon," some one added.

"They are yours," assented Dick; "do with them as you will. They deserve the fate you name, if not indeed a worse. The world is well rid of such human wolves."

Strong hands were immediately laid upon these wretches, and they were dragged from the room by the almost frenzied mob. Excitement had been wrought to the highest pitch.

As the men were dragging them through the crowd in the hall, a thought came to one of the captors, and he communicated it to the others.

They stopped, and one turned back to inquire: "Will yer put off that fight till we has done fer these bad cnes, boss? We don't want ter miss any of that, you bet."

"It shall be put off till you have done your work," Dick promised.

"Nuff sed! We'll be on hand."

They went on with their prisoners, and as soon as they were out upon the piazza a howl was set up by the crowd outside.

Begging for mercy, that mercy they had never shown their own victims, the miserable ruffians were dragged away to the nearest tree, and there ropes were speedily placed around their necks.

A little time only was allowed them; then a score of willing hands laid hold upon the ropes, and the bodies were swung as high as the limb over which the ropes had been thrown. And the ropes having been made secure, a little pistol practice was indulged in by the infuriated citizens—the swaying bodies being the targets at which they fired.

Horrible! you say. Think of the place, and the crimes of which the wretches had been found guilty! Murder could not be called the greatest of the evils that had been proven against them, and Wild West justice is summary and right to the point, every time. The proof against the ruffians was positive, and a regular course of trial would have sent them to the same fate—hanging.

Perhaps a hundred shots were fired in all, when the crowd turned away in the direction of the hotel, leaving the corpses swaying in the night breeze.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHEATED AT LAST.

MEANWHILE, in the hotel, the plans concerning the life and death struggle between the remaining outlaws and their bitter foes were being discussed.

Dandy Dick had laid down the only demand he had to make—that it should be a fair fight, man to man.

He wanted to meet his foe on even terms, each armed with a knife only, and so settle the score. Further than that, he was willing to leave everything to the management of the crowd.

The arrangements were finally completed.

Morgan was to be kept bound until the time came to release him for the fight.

At a given signal he was to be freed, a knife put in his hand, and he would have to defend himself.

There would be no quarter shown him, and no other condition was named. It must be a fight to the death for one or the other.

The combat was to take place in the street, the combatants to be stationed a certain distance apart, and at a given signal they were to approach each other and begin the deadly fray.

To all these arrangements the concealed woman in the rear of the hall was an attentive listener.

A weapon was still in her hand, and often she was tempted to rush in and shoot the enemies of the man she loved; but she checked the desire—first, because it would take away the only hope

she had of saving the rascal; next, Dick Darrel had done her favors she could not forget.

"No, no," she kept saying to herself; "I must not do that, I must not do that. It would ruin the only chance I have. It is working well to suit my plans, and I must wait. If I give my life for his I shall not have lived in vain, and then he will know what my love meant."

Barney O'Linn insisted upon following the same plan as his master.

He would meet his enemy at the same time and in the same manner, and so the double score would be settled.

Dick tried to dissuade him from this purpose, as his enemy was a larger man, and had seen more years, but the young Irishman was determined.

Knowing by his own experience how Barney felt about it, Dick did not offer peremptory objection. It was better to die in such a cause of honor, he argued, than to live under the wrong unavenged.

Both were willing to lay down life for the honor of those they had loved.

The time for action had now come, and the excitement was intense.

With the coming of the crowd from the hanging of the other rascals, a general howl went up for the fight to begin.

The rooms were speedily cleared, and all adjourned to the street. At the same time the concealed woman left her place and stole out at the rear of the room.

Making her way quickly to the point where she had left the horses, she stopped there, all atremble, handling nervously the weapon still in her hand. For her it was a crucial time.

"I could fire and kill him from out the shadows," she muttered, "but that would not save Mason. The mob would hang him—will hang him, anyhow, unless I can save him. No, no; I must risk all—all!"

Putting away the weapon, she untied the horses, mounted one, held the rein of the other in hand, and waited.

What she intended to do may be guessed. It was like undertaking a forlorn hope.

There was but one chance in a thousand that she would succeed.

When the men filed out of the hotel, the mob in the street set up a shout of applause, and cries of every sort filled the air.

Craig Morgan was pale but determined. He had no hope for his life, for he knew there could be no escape for him, even did he kill his enemy; and that one last stroke was all he looked forward to. He was determined that Dick Darrel should die, and by his hand.

And it was the same with Owen Maron with respect to Barney O'Linn. With no hope for himself, all he looked forward to was the satisfaction of killing his foe before he died.

Many lights had been provided, lanterns, torches, etc.; so the street was well illuminated. A dense crowd was on each side, which would probably form into a ring as soon as the fight had begun.

Dick and Barney took their places opposite the hotel, while Morgan and Maron were placed at some distance away, where they were to be set free, when Dick and Barney were to advance and meet them.

Dick had laid off his coat and vest, his right sleeve was rolled up to the elbow, and his knife was in his grasp.

The outlaws had not yet been permitted to prepare, but Dick now gave the signal for their release.

Immediately their bonds were severed, and they were told to make ready.

Their preparations were soon made. Casting off coats and vests, and rolling up the right sleeve, as Dick and Barney had done, they called for their weapons.

Knives were given them, and they awaited the signal from Dandy Dick.

The final moment had come, and the dense crowd of lookers-on held their breath in the awful suspense. The horrible conflict was at hand.

Dandy Dick was seen to take one or two full, deep breaths; then he gave the signal for the others to be released.

It was done immediately.

The men who had been holding the outlaws removed their hands and drew back.

Dick and Barney clutched tightly their weapons, gave an exchange of glances, and advanced.

Devil Duval and his Right Bower were seen to brace themselves for the encounter, but they did not offer to draw any further into the crowd than they were.

Perhaps they had a good reason for this. If they came off victors, it was possibly their in-

tention to try to cut their way out of the throng, and thus escape.

The shouts from the crowd were no longer heard, the hum of lower talk was dying away, and it was a moment of almost breathless suspense.

Every sympathy was with Dandy Dick and Barney, and it was questionable whether the outlaws would receive fair play, did it appear that they would win.

Dick had pledged the crowd upon this point, however. It must be a fair fight to the finish, he had declared; no one to interfere. Let the best man win, the other meet his fate.

And to this the crowd had agreed. But, would they live up to it? It was, as said, doubtful. In any event, there was no hope for the outlaws. Even should they succeed in overcoming their antagonists, their fate was a foregone conclusion.

Dick and Barney stepped forward, when, suddenly, Craig Morgan raised his hand and cried—"Stop!"

"Well?" interrogated Dick, as he and Barney halted.

"I want one thing understood," the outlaw said.

"What is it? Speak your mind quickly, for I am in no mood to waste time."

The woman with the two horses had just started around the corner of the rear sheds of the hotel.

Her eyes and ears had been taking in everything, and she believed the moment had come for her to act. She now stopped and waited to hear the outcome of this.

"It is this," the outlaw set forth: "If your man overcomes mine, or mine yours, the winner is not to help either you or me."

"Decidedly not!" Dick forcibly answered. "I want no help from any man! It is your life or mine, Craig Morgan, and that here and now. Citizens, let no man interfere on either side."

The hand of the outlaw was still raised.

"Citizens," he demanded, "in case I win the fight, what then?"

"Death!" was the shout on every hand.

He knew well enough before asking. The question was indeed needless.

His hand was lowered; he turned and said something in a low tone to his Bower and again they braced themselves for the inevitable.

Dick and Barney stepped forward again, and now the crowd was hushed with the excitement of the moment.

The knives flashed in the light; their cold, keen blades were soon to cross in deadly conflict, and blood was soon to stain the glittering steel.

The distance between the antagonists, considerable at first, had now nearly half of it been traversed by Dick and Barney, when, suddenly, another actor appeared upon the scene.

Two horses broke through the astounded crowd, knocking persons right and left as they plunged forward, goaded by whip and spur, and upon the back of one was a woman!

"Quick!" she cried. "Quick! Your only hope, Charles Mason! I risk my life for yours!"

To that assembled crowd it was a revelation. It was the forgotten "dude"—the missing Viola Tazewell!

Craig Morgan saw and accepted the chance, and even before her words had been fully uttered he had vaulted into the saddle and was off like the wind!

The woman had started after him, but she was too late.

The other villain, no slower than his leader to see their one forlorn hope, caught bold of her, as she passed, hurled her to the ground, and springing upon the horse as Morgan had done, dashed away after him.

It had all taken place in fewer seconds than it has taken to pen the words telling of it.

The crowd had looked on, apparently too spellbound to think or act.

Dandy Dick, however, had sprung forward at a run, but he was too late.

His hand mechanically sought the place where his revolver ought to have been, but the weapon had been laid aside.

"Great heavens!" he cried, "am I to be cheated after all? Fire after them, men! Fire! Fire!"

And fire the citizens did, but the gap had widened and their aim was no aim at all.

Bullets flew thick and fast, but not one took effect, so far as could be seen, and with yells of derision the two devils in human form plunged headlong down the street and quickly disappeared.

Dick Darrel had gazed after them like a man

in utter despair, standing as one turned to stone.

He had seen his foe slip from his grasp, and was powerless to prevent.

It was the same with Barney O'Linn.

With the disappearance of the flying outlaws, Dandy Dick dropped upon his knees right there in plain sight of all, and raising his clinched fists above his head, cried:

"My God! why was this allowed to be? Why was the man who has ruined my life thus allowed to escape my just vengeance? Here, in the sight of the heavens and in the presence of these witnesses, do I renew my vow! No rest will I know, no rest can I know, till I have avenged the wrong that has been done me and mine. By my hand Craig Morgan shall die; I swear it!"

"An' it is mesel' dhat chalks me name down to every wurred av dhat same wid ye!" cried Barney O'Linn. "May dbe roight hand av me wither, av Oi ever give up me task till dhat murtherin' villain phwat kilted me poor sither Nora has settled his account wid me!"

Dick had risen quickly, and stepping forward to where the woman was just regaining her feet, he caught her by the wrist, crying:

"Woman! what have you done? Is this the way you repay the favors I have shown you?"

"Forgive me, oh, forgive me!" was the pitiful plea. "I loved him; I love him yet; I could not see him die and not try to save him. He was my promised husband, and I could not give him up, not even when he was so false to me. Forgive me; I am not forgetful of your kindnesses; I can never do you harm; but I could not allow you to take the life of the man I love."

Dick could hardly contain himself.

Casting the woman from him he wheeled around, to find himself face to face with the Lady Tiger and Barney.

No word was spoken, at first, and Dick offered a hand to each, crossing his arms in order to give the right to the woman, offering the left to Barney. And hands were clasped in hands, silently, firmly.

"We have been foiled," spoke Dick. "We have been cheated of our righteous revenge. But the end is not yet. Let us here pledge our help to one another to carry out our common cause against these thrice accursed villains, even to the bitter death. Do you agree?"

Both answered promptly in the affirmative, and their oath was taken.

When next they looked, the other woman was gone.

The succeeding morning the bodies of the lynched outlaws were taken down and decently interred. There were none to mourn, and the town of Burnt Match felt well rid of that many dangerous characters. It was a wholesome lesson to some others of her denizens.

A search was made that day for the Dozen's rendezvous. A horse of one of the band was made use of to guide the searchers. It was ridden out of the camp in the direction its owner had been in the habit of going—the rest of the party following.

An hour's ride had brought them to a cavern in the hills, where every proof was found to establish the truth of the story the poor Irish girl had told. No one regretted the part Judge Lynch had played. The only regret was that the chief of the band and his lieutenant had not shared their confederates' fate.

The woman who had assisted their escape was not seen again. Where she had gone no one could tell. And, in truth, it was little cared.

In the afternoon three persons set out in company from Burnt Match, the three sworn avengers—Dandy Dick, Mary Warne and Barney O'Linn. Whither they were going they hardly knew, then; whither they went, finally, it is for the future to determine and perhaps record.

THE END.

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